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Niles approves annual Four Flags Apple Festival

FILE | LEADER PUBLICATIONS

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

NILES — The Apple Festival Committee's request to conduct the 53rd annual Four Flags Area Apple Festival from Thursday, Sept. 25 through Sunday, Sept. 28 was approved 7-1 during Monday's Niles City Council meeting.

The four-day event will ring in the fall season with all kinds of entertainment, activities and treats.

The city will contribute $8,152 in-kind donations to support the festival, which will cover the cost of barricade setup and removal, policing and utility and street costs. The list of requests also included permission to conduct the annual Apple Festival Grand Parade scheduled for Saturday, Sept. 27 as well as the Youth Day Parade set for Saturday, Sept. 20.

Fourth ward councilmember Michael Thompson cast the lone dissenting vote because he does not believe the city should contribute funds toward events.

"Like the previous festivals, I go to them myself and then I spend currency there to help pay for this stuff but there's no reason why someone else who doesn't go to these things should have to pay for them," he said.

The council also approved the Apple Festival's annual fireworks display set for Friday, Sept. 26.

In other business, the council:

• Approved a Development Agreement between the City of Niles and Summit Church of Niles for the extension of three-phase power by the Utilities Department - Electric Division into AEP/I&M territory on West River Road with the cost of approximately $150,000 to be prepaid by Summit Church.

• Authorizing the purchase of two Clow Fire Hydrants from Core & Main of St. John, Indiana at a cost of $7,410 to be charged to the Utilities Department Water Division - Hydrants budget.

• Authorized the Utilities Department to accept the quote from Peerless Midwest of Mishawaka, Indiana in the amount of $4,720 to seal and abandon the well at 950 Bond Street and charge

See FESTIVAL, Page A7

Edwardsburg superintendent earns contract extension

By JUSTIN FLAGEL
Leader Publications
Contributor

EDWARDSBURG — The Edwardsburg School Board approved several new hires and extended their superintendent contract at their regular monthly meeting on Monday.

Superintendent Dr. Courtney Szucs saw their contract extended to the 2027-28 school year.

"On behalf of the school board and our entire school community we want to really extend our sincere thank you and appreciation for everything you've done," said Board President Tony Overmyer.

Several teacher and staff positions were filled at the meeting. The board also approved the hiring of Ryan Towner for the position of assistant superintendent.

Athletic Director Jon Pobuda brought multiple track and field athletes to the attention of the meeting for their recent MHSAA Track & Field All-State achievements, including Sarah Pippin for placing third in the girls high jump, Mobius Stubblefield for placing seventh in the Boys 400 meter dash and Zachary Overmyer for earning a state championship in the boys high jump. Overmyer also recently returned from Oregon, where he finished in 12th place in national competition.

The meeting was preceded by a budget hearing for the General Fund Budget for the 2025-2026 fiscal year. Michigan law requires a budget hearing be held prior to formally adopting a General Fund Budget. The board received an update on future funding and expenses. With no concrete numbers on school funding yet delivered from the Michigan Legislature and special funds ending from the COVID-19 era, the district is planning conservatively with their budget. The budget was approved later during the regular meeting.

The date for graduation in 2026 was officially chosen as Thursday, May 21. It was also noted that the day would be made into a half day of school for other students in order to avoid complications with student pick-up at the elementary school.

A new student handbook was adopted, updating details regarding bus routes and pick up times, as well as adding smart watches to the list of "distracting items" and adding changes to the student dress code.

Trustees heard several updates regarding the status of goals set out by the district in recent years, including various plans to improve communication between the district and parents. The district is beginning to use new communication apps and will be using more consistent branding. Parent advisory committees will also continue to be used to help advise the board.

The new school board meeting will take place on Monday, July 7th at 7pm in the District Administrative Center Board of Education Room.

FAMILY FUN
EVENT DRAWS HUNDREDS IN NILES

By MAXWELL HARDEN
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NILES — A local business kicked off the summer with an event the entire family could enjoy.

Jessica Massey State Farm hosted its fourth annual Family Fun Event Sunday, June 22 at Riverfront Park in downtown Niles. The free event featured food, music, bounce houses, face painting, games, plenty of water and more. According to Massey, more than 300 people attended the event. While down from last year's numbers, volunteers felt the event was still a success considering the extreme heat experienced over the weekend.

"There were longer lines last year, so no one had to wait this year," Massey said.

Massey founded her business in 2021 and plans two events per year – photos with Santa in December and the Family Fun Event in June – as a way to both engage the community and to provide free, family-friendly entertainment.

"We just want to do something fun in the community," she said. "The better the community is, the better everyone. You give to the community and it gives right back so it goes both ways. That's my philosophy in general as a business owner."

For Massey, seeing the smiling faces having fun makes the event worthwhile every year.

"It's amazing, it's really fun to see the kids enjoy it and have fun," she said. "I love that it's free – there aren't many free things around here. The festivals we have are great but you have to have 100 bucks to walk through the door in order to feed a family and play games. It's just about doing something that everyone can afford."

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Jessica Massey State Farm hosted its fourth annual Family Fun Event Sunday at Riverfront Park in downtown Niles.

C&S Wholesale Grocers, SpartanNash to merge in $1.8 billion deal

By MAXWELL HARDEN
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GRAND RAPIDS — C&S Wholesale Grocers and SpartanNash announced Monday that the two companies will merge in a deal valued at $1.8 billion.

According to a news release, New Hampshire-based C&S will acquire SpartanNash for a purchase price of $26.90 per share of SpartanNash common stock in cash, representing total consideration of $1.77 billion, including assumed net debt. The Transaction price represents a 52.5 percent premium over SpartanNash's closing price on June 20 of $17.64, and a premium of 42.0 percent to its 30-day volume-weighted average stock price as of June 20.

Once the transaction closes, SpartanNash will become part of C&S and will operate as a privately held company. The transaction is expected to close in late 2025, subject to certain customary closing conditions including, among other things, SpartanNash shareholder approval and applicable regulatory approvals.

SpartanNash President and CEO Tony Sarsam believes the stability of the combined organizations

See MERGE, Page A7

OBITUARIES

Sammie Earl Fee
Beverly Sands
Robert Allan McKeel
Robert Booth
James Mulder
Stephen Russel Kelley
Sheila Bourelly
LaMonte "Monty" Norton
JoAnne Collier
Grindal "Gwen" Turner
Jacquelyn Mefford
Frances Skibbe
A7

FRANKLY
TIPS, QUIPS, AND BLIPS
"I thought we had a President who was going to end all US wars?" A2

Ready for Redbud? B1

FRANKLY

TIPS, QUIPS, AND BLIPS

What is Frankly? It is where readers sound off on issues of the day. Have a tip, quip or blip? Call or text Frankly at 219-455-2349 or email rich.cains@leaderpub.com

I thought we had a President who was going to end all US wars?

Without the Polio vaccine, we would all be crippled. The Covid vaccine saved many lives and Trump did help cut through the bureaucracy. How can RFK be such an anti-vaxxer against these wonderful discoveries? He has a fruitcake for brains.

I can see gas prices spiking... Once again more fighting and no end in sight in the Middle East. When will this end?

Putin says "All of Ukraine is ours..." I guess this is a little foreshadowing of when and how this conflict is going to end. If the nations of the world spent more time putting resources into agriculture, medicine and kindness rather than bunker bombs, missiles and jet fighters, I think we would find the peace that the people crave.

I'm glad our roads are being repaired, but life would be better if they weren't all being repaired at once. I can't leave the house without being detoured everywhere I drive.

I'll take the heat... How quickly we have forgotten November, December, January, February, March, April and early May...

Adopt a dog or cat. They have short lives and do not deserve to live in a cage their whole life.

Iven Kincheloe, Jr. was posthumously inducted into the DeMolay Hall of Fame. He was a DeMolay from Dowagiac and considered the First in Space as a Bell X-2 pilot.

Why are we allowing these 70-80 year old men that run the world to start another war? How many of them will even be around in 10 years?

WEATHER

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Partly Cloudy	Mostly Sunny	60% Chance of Storms	Mostly Sunny	Mostly Sunny	Mostly Sunny
85° 67°	91° 73°	89° 69°	82° 64°	85° 65°	83° 68°

HUNDREDS ATTEND MICHIANA PRIDEFEST

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

NILES — Hundreds gathered at Riverfront Park Saturday, June 21 to celebrate the LGBTQ+ community at the second annual Michiana Pridefest.

Sponsored by dozens of businesses and organizations including Corewell Health, Whirlpool, Pizza Transit and Four Winds Casinos, the family-friendly event featured a drag show, sponsor, non-profit and artisan booths – including Hinman Counseling Services, Trinity Episcopal Church, Short n' Sweet Concessions and more – activities for children, food trucks, a DJ and live entertainment.

The event was the second planned by the Outcenter of Southwest Michigan this month after the inaugural Cass County Pridefest June 14 in Dowagiac. It has one more Pride event scheduled for the area, the third annual Twin Cities Pridefest from 4 to 8 p.m. Saturday, June 28 at Shadowland Pavilion in St. Joseph.

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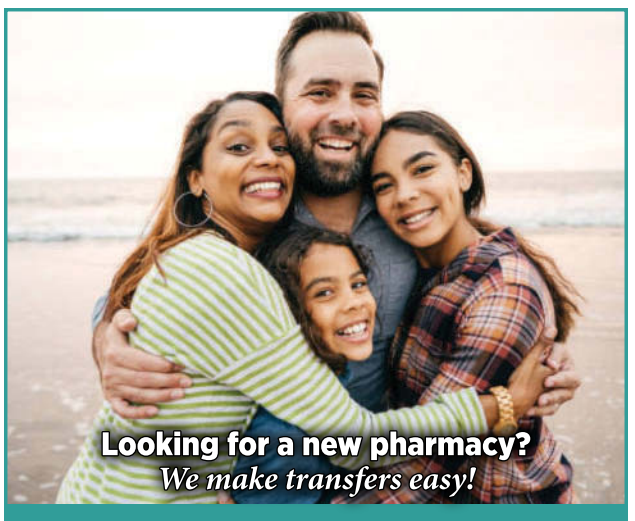

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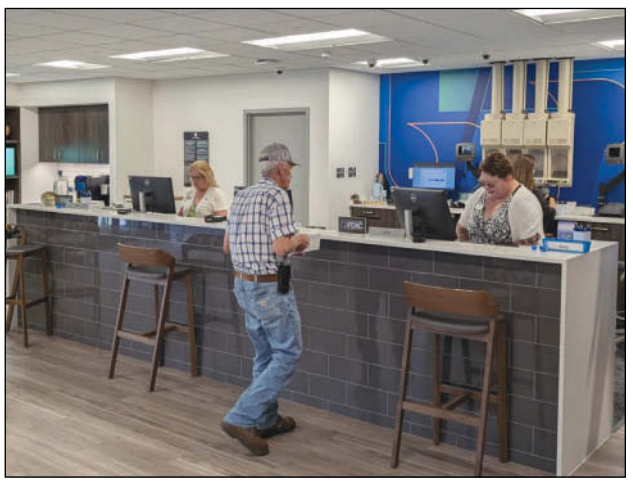

MAXWELL HARDEN | LEADER PUBLICATIONS

Niles Fifth Third Bank celebrates 'next gen' renovation

By MAXWELL HARDEN
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NILES — A local business that has served the community for decades aims to better serve the needs of its customers with its fresh, modern makeover.

Community members, partners, and friends gathered at the Niles Fifth Third Bank at 322 Broadway Tuesday to celebrate its transformation into a Next Gen Financial Center. The center's open design aims to make it easy for customers to get quick digital service or discuss more complex banking products like college savings plans, mortgages or retirement solutions. The new, streamlined building features flexible meeting and seating areas that offer adjustable layers of privacy. The branch also has a smart ATM where customers can choose the denomination of bills they would like as well as a tech wall with a digital screen focused on customer financial education.

"This is a customer-centric approach to banking," said Fifth Third Retail Executive Jeff Ospina. "Our bankers are mobile and using technology that allows them to meet and serve customers in a variety of settings. Rather than having teller windows, the new space gives employees the freedom to move around the lobby. Tablet devices encourage the more direct and personal way of serving customers and we have flexible meeting and seating areas. As you can see with layers of privacy that can adjust depending on how and where the customer chooses to have a conversation with all of us."

Fifth Third Bank's Broadway location opened its doors in 1970. Niles Mayor Nick Sheltonwas on hand to share his enthusiasm for the revamped bank.

It's always so exciting to see investment and innovation right here in Niles and Fifth Third has been such an amazing partner in our community for 55 years," he said. "We're just really excited to see your continued commitment in action and by creating a space like this, it just continues to strengthen the connection in our community that makes Niles a great place to live and do business."

Brandywine school board approves new budget, celebrates state award

By DEBRA HAIGHT
Leader Publications Contributor

NILES CHARTER TOWNSHIP — The Brandywine school district has a new budget after board members gave their stamp of approval to the proposed 2025-26 budget at their meeting Monday night. Board members also heard from district administrators and learned that Brandywine came in second in a state safer driving contest.

Brandywine High School came in second in the state's Strive 4 A Safer Drive program. School Resource Officer Amber McGaffigan and high school students spoke to the board last month about their efforts to create safer routes to the district's schools. The students have met all year to discuss school traffic safety issues.

McGaffigan said the ultimate goal is to apply for a $900,000 grant from the Michigan Department of Transportation's Safe Routes to School/Michigan Fitness program in the future. Possible projects include lighting and sidewalk improvements around Brandywine Elementary School, Brandywine Middle/Senior High School and Merritt Elementary School.

The Strive 4 A Safer Drive program is a teen driving initiative presented by the Ford Philanthropy Foundation and the Michigan Office of Highway Safety Planning.

With the budget, board members approved both the new budget and the budget amendment at the board's June 9 meeting.

He said earlier this month that the final general fund budget amendment has revenue set at $18.711 million and expenditures at $18.54 million for a surplus of $171,000.

With the 2025-26 general fund budget, he has budgeted conservatively with no increase in state aid among other things. He has set revenue at $17,881,420 and expenditures at $18,679,120 for a deficit of $797,700. He noted that he included no raises for staff and a five percent "haircut" in state funding in the new budget.

If those numbers stay the same through the 2025-26 year, the district would end the year with a fund balance of $3.4 million which represents 18.23 percent of fund equity.

Welburn noted that the board has set a goal of the district having a fund balance of at least 15 percent of expenditures. He said the district administration strives to have that percentage level at 20 percent or more.

In other business Monday, board members heard year-end reports from district principals and administrators, approved annual resolutions and hired four teachers.

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Record 39 participate in ETS theatre camp at Beckwith

By JOHN EBY
Southwestern Michigan College

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DOWAGIAC — Southwestern Michigan College's Educational Talent Search and Dowagiac's Beckwith Theatre partnered to present a free two-week Summer Youth Program that attracted a record 39 participants from across the area.

Camp culminates with free public performances June 27 at 7 p.m. and June 28 at 2 p.m. of the five-scene spoof by Don Zolidis, "How to Get Away With a Murder Mystery."

Besides color-coded killers, the detectives come cloaked in familiarity if you are reminded of Andy Griffith's Matlock, Natasha Lyonne's lie-detecting Poker Face, Britain's Sherlock Holmes, Maine mystery writer Jessica Fletcher or Clue's butler.

The camp is for students entering grades 6-12 with Ryan Murray returning as director. Murray, a former police officer, has been running the camp since 2019.

"Five vignettes poke fun at crime dramas," Murray said. "Each time a different one is the killer. We try to pick flexible plays because we never know how many kids we're going to have. About 75 percent came back from last year."

"We started Monday and we're halfway through rehearsals," he said June 20. "They're doing such a good job learning their lines, they're ahead of schedule."

Niles High School senior Lily Babler returns for her fourth year. "We did 'A Christmas Carol' in 2019," then started theatre camp with her sisters, Donna and Annie, the three youngest of eight children.

Her post-high school plans remain uncertain.

"I like the people here," Lily said. "It's a good environment to be in."

Krista Blanchard, 13, of Cassopolis, is at theatre camp for her first time as she enters eighth grade.

"I've done ETS since sixth grade. I signed up last year and got into Science Fair Camp. I like playing Mr. Burgundy. The lines are very funny," Krista said. "Last year I auditioned for Disney Channel. I've wanted to be an actor for a while, so I took acting classes at the Savage Bean."

Krista is a percussionist in band and likes doing art.

Stage Manager Baylee Bauman, who gets to hurl a "body" from the balcony, will be a junior at Brandywine High School.

Baylee organizes props, monitoring the script for when her crew of four "has to go out and move our stuff around. I've been doing it for four years now, both at my school and here. We move desks and chairs mostly, but there's a pool table for one scene. At my school we have to put mic packs on people."

"I either want to go into criminal psychology or theatre," Baylee said.

Maddie Steenbeke, who debuted at 9, at 12 is a three-year veteran starting seventh grade at Dowagiac Middle School.

"I've made tons of friends, new friends every year from all different schools," she said. "It's so fun, and I wouldn't have met these amazing people otherwise.

"During the school year I play saxophone in band and I'm going to do Girls on the Run. I flipped through the script a couple of times and Frazzled Woman kind of yelled to me. It's awesome that every year there are more people," Maddie said. "I got inspired (to try acting) when I watched 'A Christmas Carol' here at the Beckwith. I took improv and acting classes at South Bend Civic Theatre. I was in the ensemble for Dowagiac's musical."

Brady Frazier, Dowagiac sophomore, is in his fourth year at Beckwith. He sings in Hunter Schuur's DUHS Chamber Choir, "but I've never had to learn lines in two weeks before. I like getting to be on stage, to play a character, to learn their personality and how they would do things differently than me. And I like making memories with the cast. My closest friends have come out of theatre."

As Orange 1, he plays a senator. "I like being in charge," Brady said, "telling people to calm down. I want to go into acting. It's something I'm very passionate about and love. That would be a dream job."

Dowagiac cast members include Brady Frazier, Orange 1; Taylor Higdon, Orange 2; Janessa Mariano, Orange 5; Hunter Steinman, Green 2; Madeline Steenbeke, Frazzled Woman 4; Nicki Thompson, Southern Gentleman; Allison Zink, Lady Indigo 3; Kadie Zink, Lady Indigo 2; Owen Killarney, stage crew; Emma Zink, stage crew; and Ashe McLeod, make-up.

Cassopolis: Krista Blanchard, Mr. Burgundy 1; Myles Christian, Mr. Burgundy 4; Samantha Fosdick, Lady Indigo 5; Madeline Miller, Lady Indigo 4; and Zhonnica Skorupa, Off White 3.

Edwardsburg: Jayden Bishop, Mr. Burgundy 3; Harlem Devito, British Detective; Aaliyah Garcia, Off White 4; Lexi-Rae Howell, Narrator 1; Elizabeth Sell, Orange 3; and Steven Solarek, Vik.

Marcellus: Payton Courtney, Green 3; Trent Allen, tech crew; and Tuxson Park, stage crew.

Niles: Annie Babler, Off White 5; Donna Babler, Lady Indigo 1, Green 5; Lily Babler, Mr. Burgundy 5; Ely Davis, Orange 4; Gwendolyn Lucas, Green 4; Zosia Olivia, Elderly Woman; Addison Thomas, Off White 2; Baylee Bauman, stage crew; Shara Bullock, stage crew; and Maxx Simpson, tech crew.

Stevensville: Izzi Prouty, Butler; Lia Prouty, Mr. Burgundy 2; and Liam Prouty, Off White 1.

Buchanan City Commissioners discuss construction projects

By DEBRA HAIGHT
Leader Publications
Contributor

BUCHANAN — Buchanan city officials answered questions Monday night about not only the $19.4 million downtown reconstruction project but also the nearly completed extension of the McCoy Creek Trail.

Monday's meeting was held at the Buchanan Area Senior Center on Rynearson due to construction around City Hall. The commission meeting will be back at City Hall for the July meetings.

While the downtown construction won't be done until late November at the earliest, Buchanan City Manager Tony McGhee said navigating around town should get a little better by the end of August when the infrastructure work on Red Bud Trail will be done and the street repaved.

"The downtown is moving along," McGhee said. "The sewer lines and manholes will be set Wednesday and then the road crews will come in behind. Once they get to Front Street, they can go to town. The water lines are done."

He did acknowledge that some contamination has been found near the intersection of Red Bud and Front Street but doesn't think it will hold things up too much.

He said that the last of the $500,000 worth of road work on local streets the City Commission approved earlier this year should wrap up later this week. Sections of Liberty Street have already been repaved and River Street will be done this week, he said.

Work will also be done either this week or next on the trail extension project on Schirmer Parkway. "Once we get through this week and next, everything will be done but the downtown," he said.

City officials have been criticized by some for doing the trail extension work on Schirmer Parkway and closing down that road at the same time the downtown streets have been torn up. Having Schirmer closed eliminated one of the routes people would normally use to get around the construction.

Monday, one local resident didn't criticize the road closure but did question why the trail is so wide and taking so much of people's front yards and the road right of way. "Why was Schirmer designed the way it was?" Jeanne Harris asked. "I know it's a trail but it's taking up half the right of way."

McGhee said the width of the trail which is 10 feet isn't something the city asked for but is what the state calls for in its grant requirements. He said the traffic lanes are each the normal 11 feet wide and only seem narrower because the trail has taken up some of the shoulders of the road.

The trail extension takes the trail out of the city via Schirmer Parkway across the River Street bridge to Walton Road. The project was funded with a number of grants including from the Michigan Department of Transportation.

He said he would post information about the situation on the city's website and Facebook page so people have a better understanding of what's going on.

City Commissioner Dan Vigansky commiserated with Harris. "A four foot sidewalk would be sufficient but these are our politicians," he said. "It's an absolute debacle."

Overall, city commissioners again stressed patience to residents with the downtown construction and said the work is actually going faster here than similar work has gone in other communities. "It's going extremely fast," Vigansky said.

Commissioner Larry Money noted that similar work in Vicksburg took a year and a half. "In my opinion, it's moving well," he said

In other action Monday, commissioners approved a resolution in support of a local restaurant's application to be part of the downtown social district. McCoy Creek Tavern at 215 E. Front St. becomes the latest downtown business to sign on to the social district.

Community Development Director Rich Murphy said more and more businesses are interested in participating in the social district which the city established more than a year ago. "I have had conversations with other businesses in the district," he said. "The hope is to increase the vibrancy of the downtown."

Commissioners approved one last budget amendment for the 2024-25 fiscal year before the new fiscal year starts July 1. McGhee said that most departments came in under budget which softened the blow from $1 million worth of unexpected projects like the Days Avenue culvert repair and the Front Street retaining wall.

He said the budget came in over budget by $415,000 which he called good considering the extra culvert and retaining wall expenses.

In other news related to the budget, the commission approved the annual health care insurance resolution. The city is once again approving an 80-20 plan with employees paying 20 percent of their health care insurance costs.

The city is also going with a new provider, Priority Health, rather than Blue Cross Blue Shield and will save the city $15,345 for the coming year. McGhee said Priority Health offers better service at a lower cost and the change is acceptable to employees.

Grand Rapids man gets probation for Buchanan dispensary break-in

By DEBRA HAIGHT
Leader Publications
Contributor

NILES — A Grand Rapids man involved in a break-in at a Buchanan marijuana dispensary was sentenced Monday in Berrien County Trial Court at the Niles Courthouse.

Griggs

Deandre Montray Griggs, 22, of Grand Rapids, pleaded guilty to breaking and entering and was sentenced to two years probation, credit for 60 days in jail, 80 hours of community service, $10,214.76 in restitution and $678 in fines and costs.

The incident occurred Dec. 5, 2024 at the Zen Leaf marijuana business on Front Street in Buchanan. Griggs and two co-defendants, Antoine Cooper and Anthony Hunter, broke into the establishment. Both co-defendants have pleaded guilty with one already sentenced.

Defense attorney Carri Briseno noted that Griggs does not have any prior record and was 21 at the time of the incident. She said that Griggs has his high school diploma. "He is in a position where he can be successful," she said.

"You made a bad decision," Berrien County Trial Court Judge Gordon Hosbein told Griggs. "This was a stupid decision. It was stupid and you did a lot of damage."

Also Monday, a Benton Harbor man was sentenced to time served for possession of a loaded firearm in a vehicle.

Johnathan Livingston Powell, 38, of Benton Harbor, pleaded guilty to possession of a loaded firearm in a vehicle and was sentenced to credit for three days served and $258 in fines and costs. He must forfeit the weapon.

Powell

The incident occurred April 28 in Buchanan Township.

Defense attorney Dan French called it an honest mistake and noted that Powell has only one prior misdemeanor conviction. "He's a family man and has kids at home," he said. "He had been staying in Indiana and coming back to Michigan on the weekends."

Powell called it a "total mistake" and took ownership and responsibility for his actions. "I don't want to be away from my family, my kids need me," he said.

Judge Hosbein said that Powell's level of insight showed that he is serious about the matter.

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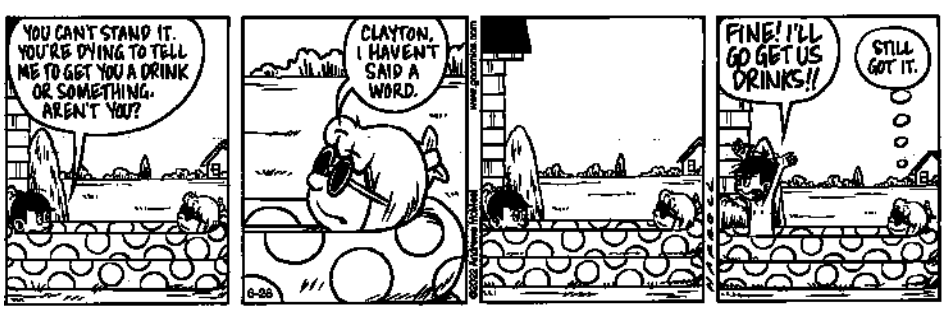
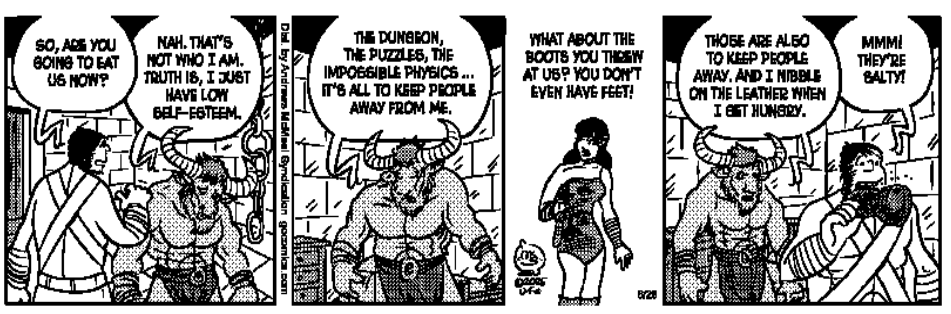
COMICS & PUZZLES

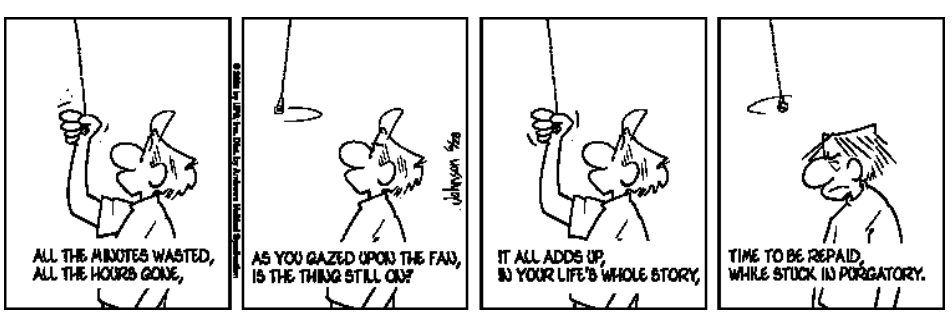
ADAM


YOU CAN'T STAND IT. YOU'RE DYING TO TELL ME TO GET YOU A DRINK OR SOMETHING. AREN'T YOU?
CLAYTON, I HAVEN'T SAID A WORD.
FINE! I'LL GO GET US DRINKS!!
STILL GOT IT.

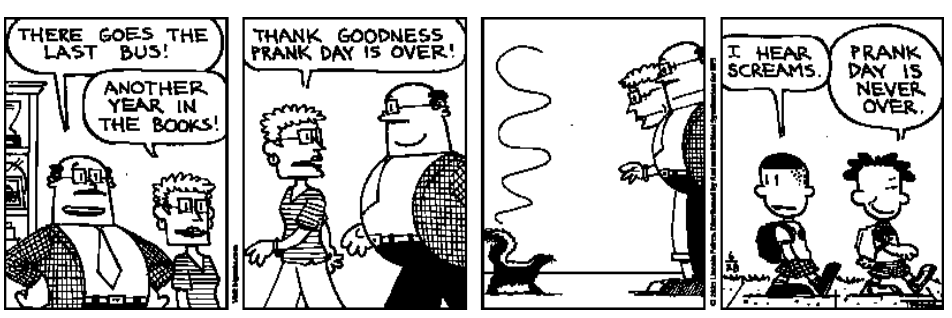
ALLEY OOP


SO, ARE YOU GOING TO EAT US NOW?
NAH. THAT'S NOT WHO I AM. TRUTH IS, I JUST HAVE LOW SELF-ESTEEM.
THE DUNGEON, THE PUZZLES, THE IMPOSSIBLE PHYSICS ... IT'S ALL TO KEEP PEOPLE AWAY FROM ME.
WHAT ABOUT THE BOOTS YOU THREW AT US? YOU DON'T EVEN HAVE FEET!
THOSE ARE ALSO TO KEEP PEOPLE AWAY. AND I NIBBLE ON THE LEATHER WHEN I GET HUNGRY.
MMM! THEY'RE SALTY!

ARLO & JANIS


ALL THE MINUTES WASTED, ALL THE HOURS GONE,
AS YOU GAZED UPON THE FAU, IS THE THING STILL ON?
IT ALL ADDS UP, IN YOUR LIFE'S WHOLE STORY,
TIME TO BE REPAID, WHILE STUCK IN PURGATORY.

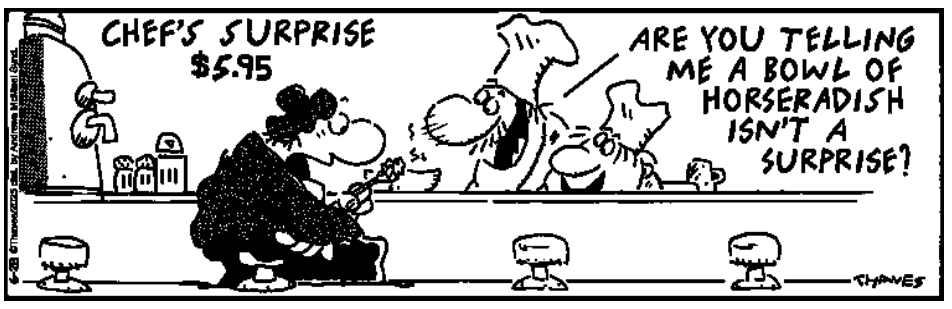
BIG NATE



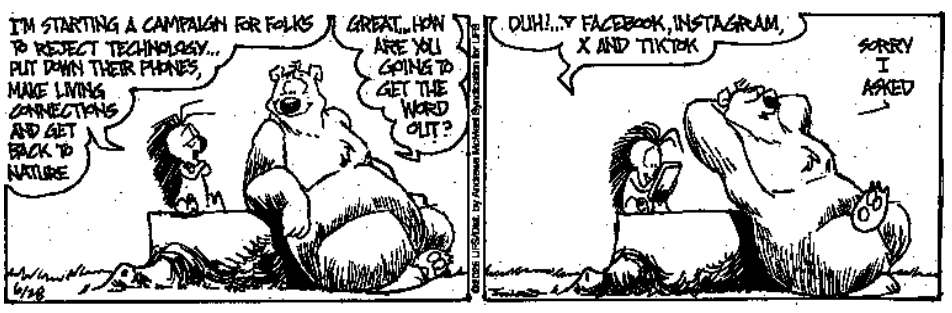
BORN LOSER

I KNOW YOU'RE NOT AS MUCH OF A ROMANTIC AS I AM, BUT EVERY ONCE IN A WHILE I'D LIKE TO HEAR THOSE THREE WORDS.
WHAT THREE WORDS?
NOT THOSE!

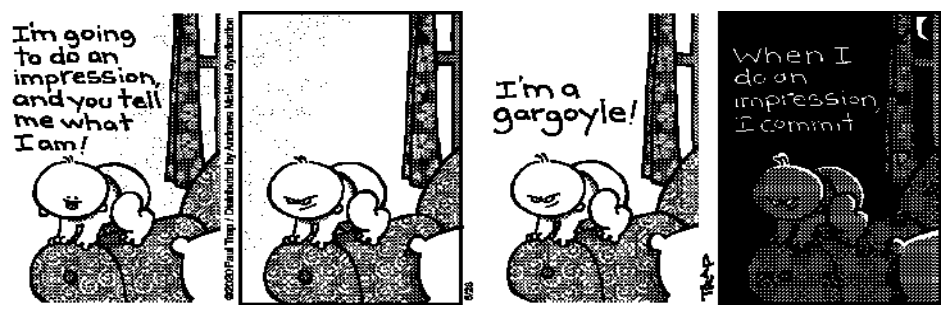
FRANK & ERNEST



GRIZZWELLS


I'M STARTING A CAMPAIGN FOR FOLKS TO REJECT TECHNOLOGY... PUT DOWN THEIR PHONES, MAKE LIVING CONNECTIONS AND GET BACK TO NATURE
GREAT...HOW ARE YOU GOING TO GET THE WORD OUT?
DUH!...FACEBOOK, INSTAGRAM, X AND TIKTOK
SORRY I ASKED

THATABABY



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SODOKU PUZZLE

HOW TO PLAY: Each row, column and set of 3-by-3 boxes must contain the numbers 1 through 9 without repetition.

DIFFICULTY RATING: 5/5

ANSWER ON PAGE 6

				6	2		9	7
3		2	8					6
	6			5				
		9		2	6			
8	5						2	9
			9	8		1		
				4			8	
6					8	7		5
7	2		5	1				

MODERATELY CONFUSED

YOU WEAR THE SAME THING AT EVERY PICNIC... A CLEAN SHIRT & BBQ SAUCE.
STAHLER 6/28
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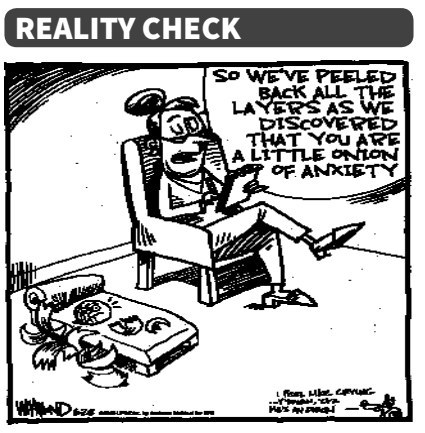
REALITY CHECK

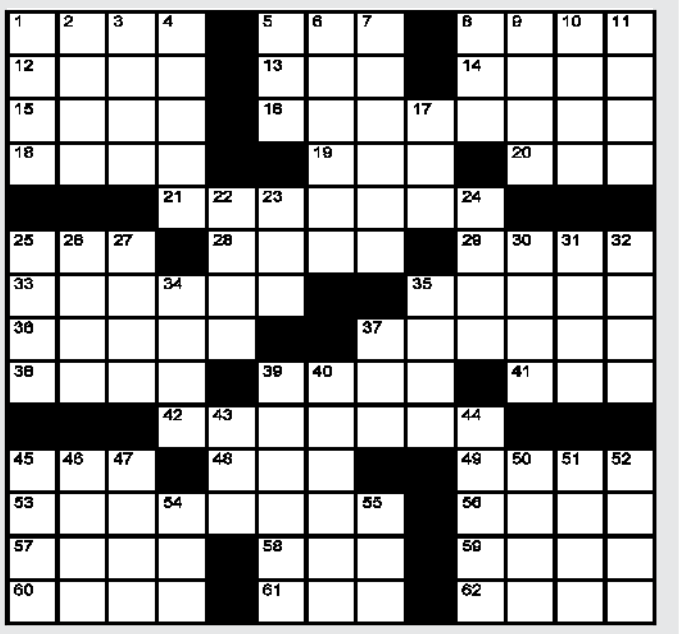


CROSSWORD PUZZLE

ACROSS
1 Variety of pear
5 Ambulance letters
8 Small fishing area
12 Bouquet
13 Contend
14 Length x width
15 Cairo's river
16 Surpassed all others
18 "No ifs, — or buts"
19 Web address
20 Time periods (Abbr.)
21 Storm
25 Brewed beverage
28 Wide
29 Sponsorship
33 Like a desert
35 Scoundrel
36 Chinese or Japanese, e.g.
37 "— Act"
38 500 sheets
39 Writer — Bellow
41 Dir. letters
42 Hinder
45 Books pro (Abbr.)
48 Single
49 Bugle
53 Tightrope
56 Fencing sword
57 About (2 wds.)
58 CIA predecessor
59 Potatoes partner
60 Close
61 One curl or press, for short
62 Closes

DOWN
1 — fide
2 Norse god
3 Auctioneer's call
4 Summit
5 Eden resident
6 Muddles (Hyph.)
7 Hidden
8 Chum
9 French airport city
10 — -do-well
11 Family men
17 Railways on trestles
22 Flat and level
23 Chess piece
24 Sawbucks
25 Ski lift (Hyph.)
26 Comfort
27 Operatic song
30 Turnstile
31 Currier and —
32 Withered
34 Freeway exit
35 Oven for pottery
37 Take legal action
39 Elder
40 Disinclined
43 Tier
44 Motif
45 Goatee location
46 Evergreen tree
47 Taj Mahal site
50 Golf competition
51 Look at books
52 Earns
54 "On — Majesty's Secret Service"
55 Clairvoyance

ANSWER ON PAGE 6



6-28

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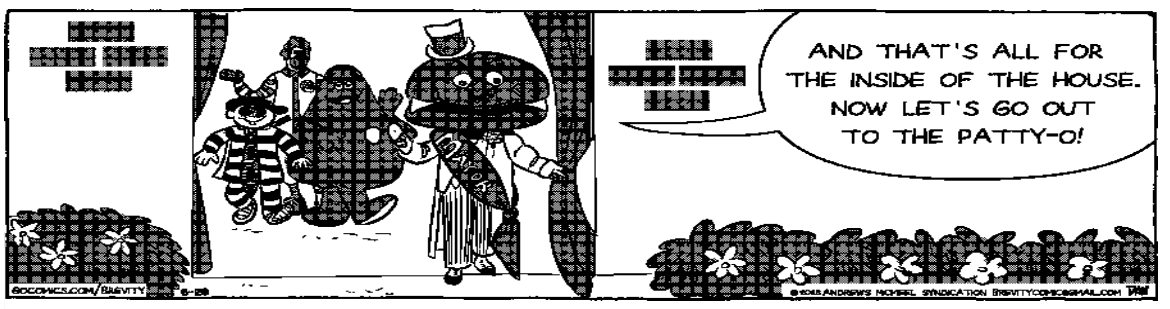
BREVITY



HEART OF THE CITY

WHERE'S JENNY AND HER FRIENDS?
OH, THEY BAILED! THE SECOND YOU STARTED SCREAMING, THEY WERE LIKE, "GOOD LUCK." SOME FRIENDS.
BUT WE DID IT! WE ALL CROSSED THE BRIDGE!
WE DID!
WE'RE SO COOL AND BRAVE!!

Two arrested following multi-state police chase

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

MASON TOWNSHIP — Two juveniles were arrested June 21 in Indiana following a police chase that began in Michigan, according to the Cass County Sheriff's Office.

Sheriff Clint Roach reports that at approximately 12:59 a.m., deputies responded to an in-progress Larceny from a motor vehicle on Kristy Lane in Mason Township.

When Deputies arrived on scene, they located a stolen vehicle. Deputies then located the suspect's vehicle, which fled from deputies leading them on a pursuit into Indiana. The suspect's vehicle came to a stop in Elkhart, Indiana, where the suspects fled on foot with deputies continuing to pursue.

Officers located two juvenile suspects who were taken into custody. The vehicle being driven by the suspects was stolen. While on the scene, deputies recovered a firearm and other stolen property. Due to the age of the juveniles, their names will not be released.

Anyone with information regarding this case is asked to call the Cass County Sheriff's Office Tip Line at 1 (800) 426-9328 or contact the Sheriff's Office through the Anonymous Web Tip Line at www.ccso.info.

Assisting agencies were Ontwa Edwardsburg PD., Elkhart City PD., and Elkhart County Sheriff's Office.

Niles man gets jail, probation for accosting child

By DEBRA HAIGHT
Leader Publications Contributor

CASSOPOLIS — A Niles man was sentenced to jail and probation after being caught trying to accost a minor for immoral purposes. He was one of three people sentenced Friday in Cass County Circuit Court.

Gill

Stephen Frank Gill, 38, of Lake Street in Niles, pleaded guilty to accost children for immoral purposes and was sentenced to three years probation, 150 days in jail with credit for 103 days served, registering as a sex offender for 25 years and $3,188 in fines and costs.

The incident occurred in February in Howard Township. A woman with the Boopac's Promise organization contacted the Cass County Sheriff's Office after she had posed as an underage female and had contact with Gill. She reported that Gill had sent videos and photos of himself to her.

Boopac's Promise is an organization that works to catch online predators. The organization honors Robert Wayne "Boopac" Lee II who had been working to catch online predators by posing as an underage female before he was killed in 2023 in Oakland County, Michigan.

Assistant Prosecutor Jason Ronning said his main concern was Gill's minimizing of his conduct in the incident. "He talked about role playing and said he made a poor decision to continue role playing," Ronning said. "He admitted to sending inappropriate pictures and videos to 14 to 18 year old ... He said it's an addiction and nothing physical happened."

Defense attorney Robert Drake said that Gill had already served over three months in prison which is at the top end of his sentencing guidelines. He said it is also a significant punishment to have to register as a sex offender for 25 years.

"He's going to have to learn how to navigate the sex offender registry which is no mean feat itself," Drake said. "He will be punished for 25 years, it will impact getting the job he wants, to live where he wants and to travel ... Registration is for a long time, it's onerous. It is in itself an additional punishment."

Gill apologized to his family, the court and the community for his poor choices. "I will continue to make amends to those I've hurt," he said. "I will strive to find my path and right my wrongs. I hope with time I may be forgiven as I try to forgive myself."

Cass County Circuit Court Judge Mark Herman spoke a little about Boopac's Promise which he noted had led to the successful prosecution of hundreds of adults around the country.

"You're 38 years old, you need to thank your lucky stars that she had done this before you had actual contact with a minor," Judge Herman said "You could have faced 25 years in prison if you had taken it one step farther. You're also lucky that you have only one misdemeanor on your record so your guidelines are low."

"I'd change my ways or you'll find out what they do to pedophiles in prison," the judge added. "You were in a relationship at the time of this incident and you also have a 10 year old daughter. How would you like a grown pervert asking your daughter the color of her panties or sending videos?"

A homeless man who had been bothering businesses in Dowagiac earlier this year was sentenced to probation.

Marvel

Donald Scott Marvel, 53, now of Cassopolis, pleaded guilty to seduction and was sentenced to 18 months probation, credit for 91 days served, completion of the Twin County Probation program and $1,088 in fines and costs.

The incident occurred Jan. 9 in Dowagiac when he was arrested after a disturbance at the Dowagiac Subway in which he was drunk, sat down and demanded food. There was a struggle when he was asked to leave during which time he grabbed the breast of a female employee.

"He said he needs help," Ronning said. "I would hope he would stop bothering the businesses in Dowagiac. He had gone that night from place to place, bothering and accosting people. I would hope he stops drinking and gets the help he needs."

"He would like Twin County, it would give him a roof over his head," Drake said. "Most people who are homeless don't choose that life, they just want someplace warm and food to eat. One of the things people do is aggression because that's the only time people pay attention to them."

Marvel apologized for his actions. "I need to get off the street, it's been very stressful for me," he said.

"You're 53 years old and have been unemployed since 2022 when you were in a car accident," Judge Herman said. "You've been using alcohol since you were 17. Here, you were drinking pretty much all of the time and you were homeless."

"Obviously this behavior is not tolerated," he added. "If you keep drinking, you will be back in front of the courts for disorderly conduct and disturbing the peace and be in and out of jail."

Kaitlin Ashley O'Dell, 26, of Elkhart, pleaded guilty to attempted fourth degree fleeing and eluding police and was sentenced to credit for five days served and $1,475 in fines and costs. She also pleaded guilty to violating her probation for a 2023 possession of meth conviction and had her probation continued.

The current incident occurred Feb. 19 on U.S. 12 and Eagle Lake Road in Edwardsburg after she had dropped her daughters off at school in Edwardsburg. Police attempted to stop her for speeding and she fled into Indiana. She was clocked at going up to 81 miles per hour.

"I never understand why people flee police," Judge Herman said. "You will always eventually get caught and instead of getting a speeding ticket, you face a felony. You totally compound it when you flee, you put yourself and others in danger just because you didn't stop for a speeding

See JAIL, Page A7

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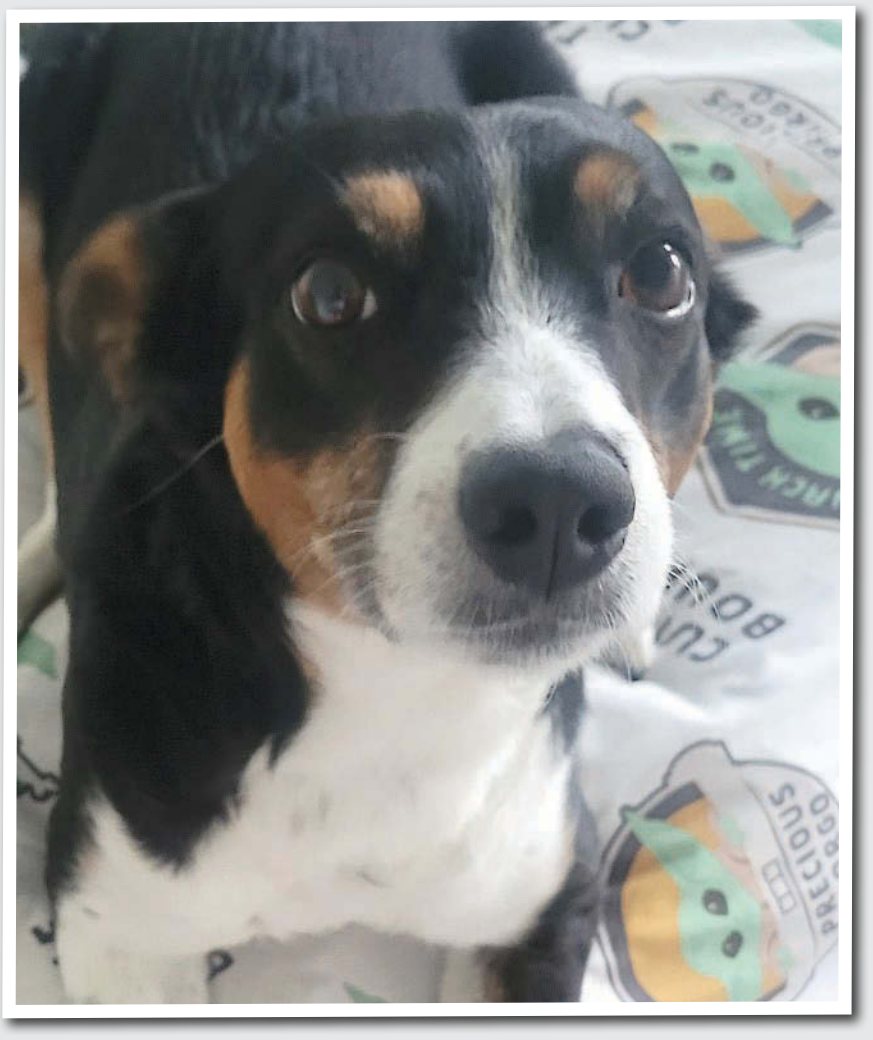
PET OF THE WEEK



Bear is a 5-year-old terrier mix with Lucky Dog Ranch. He loves watching cartoons, playing with stuffed animals, going for walks and enjoying attention. He is neutered and current on shots. Contact mike@luckydogranchswm.com.

Trial date set for Dollar General robbery suspect

By DEBRA HAIGHT
Leader Publications Contributor

NILES — A July 16 start date has been set for the trial of a Berrien Springs man accused in a series of central Berrien County robberies last year after he turned down a plea offer Monday.

Turner

Edward Deontae Turner, 39, faces 13 felony counts including four counts of armed robbery, four counts of possession of a firearm by a prohibited person, four counts of use of a firearm in the commission of a felony and one count of receiving, concealing or possession of a stolen weapon. If convicted, he would also face a charge of being a habitual offender.

A final status conference in the case was held Monday at which time Turner turned down the plea offer made by the prosecutor's office. The status conference had been delayed from last week to give him more time to consider the offer.

Berrien County Trial Court Judge Gordon Hosbein reminded Turner Monday that this was his last opportunity to accept the plea offer. The plea offer would have had him plead guilty to six counts and not face the habitual offender additional count.

Assistant Prosecutor Myrene Koch said the offer was of a guideline range of 171 to 285 months. If convicted at trial of all the counts, he faces a guideline range of 225 months to 750 months up to life in prison with an additional two year prison term for the felony firearm

See TRIAL, Page A7

CROSSWORD ANSWER
From Page 5

B	O	S	C		E	M	S		P	O	N	D
O	D	O	R		V	I	E		A	R	E	A
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N	E	A	R		R	E	P		E	N	D	S

SUDOKU ANSWER
From Page 5

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1	3	9	4	2	6	5	7	8
8	5	4	7	3	1	6	2	9
2	7	6	9	8	5	1	4	3
5	9	3	6	4	7	2	8	1
6	4	1	2	9	8	7	3	5
7	2	8	5	1	3	9	6	4

DEATH NOTICES

Sammie Earl Fee, 67, passed away on Monday, June 16, 2025, in Niles, Michigan. Arrangements have been entrusted to and are pending with Brown Funeral Home & Cremation Services.

Beverly Sands, 71, of Buchanan, died peacefully Friday, February 21, 2025 in the comfort of her family's presence.

Robert Allan McKeel, 87, of Buchanan, Michigan, passed away on Thursday, June 19, 2025. Services will be held on June 26, 2025, at 12:00pm, at Brown Funeral Home.

Robert Booth, 76, of Berrien Springs, Michigan, passed away on Friday, June 20, 2025. Arrangements are pending at Wagner Family Funerals Connelly Chapel, Cassopolis.

James Mulder, 86, of Berrien Springs, passed away on Tuesday, June 17, 2025. Arrangements have been entrusted to Allred Funeral Home in Berrien Springs. Services on June 28. www.AllredFuneralHome.com

Stephen Russel Kelley, 71, of Niles, Michigan, passed away on Tuesday, June 24, 2025. Arrangements have been entrusted to Brown Funeral Home & Cremation Services.

Sheila Bourelly, 83, of Cassopolis, died Monday, June 23, 2025. Arrangements are pending at Wagner Family Funerals Connelly Chapel, Cassopolis.

LaMonte "Monty" Norton, 79, of St. Petersburg, Florida, formerly of Three Rivers, Michigan, died Thursday, June 19, 2025. Arrangements entrusted to Wagner Family Funerals, Cassopolis, wagnercares.com.

JoAnne Collier, 77, passed away on Tuesday, June 24, 2025, in St. Joseph, Michigan. Arrangements have been entrusted to and are pending with Brown Funeral Home & Cremation Services.

Grindal "Gwen" Turner, 69, of South Bend, IN, passed away Friday, June 20, 2025. Please visit Dawn's personalized webpage to share a memory or leave a condolence to her family at www.clarkch.com.

OBITUARIES

Jacquelyn Mefford

August 10, 1936
- June 22, 2025

NILES, MI- Jacquelyn B. Mefford, 88, of Niles, Michigan, passed away Sunday June 22, 2025, at her residence in Niles. She was born, August 10, 1936, in Mt. Sterling, Kentucky to Herldon & Grace (Jewell) Becraft.

On July 6, 1957, she married John Paul Mefford. He preceded her in death on May 21, 2020. Surviving are 2 children, John Michael (Pamela) Mefford of Elkhart, IN, Gregory Scott Mefford of Niles, MI; 2 grandchildren, Brookelin Mefford and Kristopher Gregory Scott Mefford and 1 great-grandson, Riley Grey Salim Hinds. She was preceded in death by her parents and her husband.

Jacquelyn was formerly employed as a schoolteacher and taught Spanish. In keeping with her wishes, cremation will take place. Elkhart Cremation Services is entrusted with her care.

A celebration of life gathering will be held on Saturday July 26, 2025 from 12 p.m. - 2 p.m. with a lunch to follow at the Portage Prairie United Methodist Church on Orange Road in Niles Michigan and burial will follow in the church cemetery.

Frances Skibbe

April 11, 1947
- June 25, 2025

Frances Skibbe, 78, of Dowagiac, MI passed away Wednesday, June 25, 2025 at Borgess Hospital in Kalamazoo.

A Celebration of Life Service will be held at 4:00 PM on Monday, June 30, 2025 at Clark Chapel - Starks Family Funeral Homes, 405 Center St, Dowagiac, where friends may visit with his family from 1:00 PM until the time of service. Memorials may be made to Dowagiac First United Methodist Church. Please visit Frances's personalized webpage to share a memory or leave a condolence to her family at www.clarkch.com.

Frances was born April 11, 1947, in Chesterton, IN to John & Betty (Betts) Martin. On December 1, 1984, she married Frank Skibbe in Westville, IN. Frances worked for Possis Medical Group in Minnesota for many years. She was a member of the Dowagiac First United Methodist Church where she was involved in the woman's bible study. Frances enjoyed crafts, scrapbooking, sewing and genealogy. She also loved spending time with her grandchildren, going for rides in the countryside and her cats Sassy and Lucy.

Frances is survived by her husband Frank Skibbe; children Tina Bailey, Christine (Kenny) Woodruff, Frank (Christina) II Skibbe, Michele Burnett and Bobbie (John) Montgomery; grandchildren James Swiger, Michael Swiger, Nicholas Woodruff, Cameron Bailey, Rachael Bailey, Misty Wert, Meagan Juarez, Michael Lawler, Hannah Skibbe, Gabriel Skibbe, Justin Skibbe and Jacob Montgomery; many great grandchildren; siblings Jayne Braddy and Larry (Brenda) Martin.

Frances was preceded in death by her parents, grandson Brian Swiger and Sister Vicky Martin.

TRIAL

Continued from page A6

charges.

The incidents occurred between June 25 and Nov. 14. The June 25 armed robbery was at the Dollar General in Oronoko Township, the Sept. 6 incident at the Dollar General in Royalton Township, the Oct. 10 incident at the Dollar General in Benton Township and the Nov. 14 incident at the BP gas station in Oronoko Township.

During a preliminary hearing last year, employees of the different stores each described the robber as wearing a mask and brandishing a gun. They were each threatened with being shot and told to get money out of cash registers and safes. The robber took the money and ran out of the stores.

The police report on the incidents described the suspect, his weapon, the vehicle he was driving and a gray backpack he had in the Sept. 6 and Oct. 10 incidents. The description of a vehicle in the Oct. 10 incident led police to find the vehicle and place a GPS tracker on it.

Turner was arrested after the Nov. 14 incident on M-139 near Red Bud Trail. A search of his residence found a gun, disposable gloves and a bank bag stolen from the BP gas station. A search of his vehicle uncovered the gray backpack.

JAIL

Continued from page A6

ticket."

A homeless man who had been bothering businesses in Dowagiac earlier this year was sentenced to probation.

Donald Scott Marvel, 53, now of Cassopolis, pleaded guilty to seduction and was sentenced to 18 months probation, credit for 91 days served, completion of the Twin County Probation program and $1,088 in fines and costs.

The incident occurred Jan. 9 in Dowagiac when he was arrested after a disturbance at the Dowagiac Subway in which he was drunk, sat down and demanded food. There was a struggle when he was asked to leave during which time he grabbed the breast of a female employee.

"He said he needs help," Ronning said. "I would hope he would stop bothering the businesses in Dowagiac. He had gone that night from place to place, bothering and accosting people. I would hope he stops drinking and gets the help he needs."

"He would like Twin County, it would give him a roof over his head," Drake said. "Most people who are homeless don't choose that life, they just want someplace warm and food to eat. One of the things people do is aggression because that's the only time people pay attention to them."

Marvel apologized for his actions. "I need to get off the street, it's been very stressful for me," he said.

"You're 53 years old and have been unemployed since 2022 when you were in a car accident," Judge Herman said. "You've been using alcohol since you were 17. Here, you were drinking pretty much all of the time and you were homeless."

"Obviously this behavior is not tolerated," he added. "If you keep drinking, you will be back in front of the courts for disorderly conduct and disturbing the peace and be in and out of jail."

Kaitlin Ashley O'Dell, 26, of Elkhart, pleaded guilty to attempted fourth degree fleeing and eluding police and was sentenced to credit for five days served and $1,475 in fines and costs. She also pleaded guilty to violating her probation for a 2023 possession of meth conviction and had her probation continued.

O'Dell

The current incident occurred Feb. 19 on U.S. 12 and Eagle Lake Road in Edwardsburg after she had dropped her daughters off at school in Edwardsburg. Police attempted to stop her for speeding and she fled into Indiana. She was clocked at going up to 81 miles per hour.

"I never understand why people flee police," Judge Herman said. "You will always eventually get caught and instead of getting a speeding ticket, you face a felony. You totally compound it when you flee, you put yourself and others in danger just because you didn't stop for a speeding ticket."

FESTIVAL

Continued from page A1

the expense to the Utilities Department Water Division - Maintenance/Pump, Motor & Equipment budget.

• Authorized the Utilities Department to sole source and enter into an auto-renewing agreement with AmCoBi of Colorado Springs, Colorado at a total 2025 cost of $47,526.58 (initial cost of $28,486.00 and the 1" year renewal of $19,040.58) for customer portal services via "UtilityHawk" and "AquaHawk" SaaS (Software as a Service) for electric and water customers, charging the expense to the Utilities Department's budget.

• Accepted a bid from Get Busy Exteriors of Holland, Michigan in the amount of $19,700 to be paid for with CDBG funds through the Help for Homes program.

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MERGE

Continued from page A1

will allow the combined company to better compete in the U.S. food-at-home space, a more than $1 trillion a year industry.

The two companies believe the merger will result in the following:

• Complementary Food Distribution Networks to Better Support Independent Retailers: The combined company will have nearly 60 complementary distribution centers covering the United States and serve close to 10,000 independent retail locations, with collectively 200-plus corporate-run grocery stores.

• Greater Efficiency and Scale That Will Likely Lower Grocery Prices: Being able to operate at a larger scale, backed by the combined innovative capabilities of C&S and SpartanNash, will lead to a more efficient supply chain as well as an ability to obtain the best possible delivered cost of goods and promotional discounts, which are expected to mean better pricing for community retailers and at the shelf for consumers. The stability of the combined organization will enable the merged company and its customers to better compete against several huge global grocers in the U.S. food-at-home space.

• The preservation of Accessible, Affordable Nutrition and Pharmacy Services in Local Communities: Providing families with access to fresh food, necessary prescription medications and health services will be at the core of the combined company's operations.

Founded in 1918 as a supplier to independent grocery stores, C&S services customers of all sizes, supplying more than 7,500 independent supermarkets, chain stores, military bases and institutions with 100,000-plus products. The company also operates and supports corporate grocery stores and services independent franchisees under a chain-style model throughout the Midwest, South and Northeast. Earlier this year, C&S revealed that it's part of a consortium of private investors acquiring Southeastern Grocers and its Winn-Dixie and Harveys Supermarket banners from ALDI U.S.

"This is an exciting opportunity for our team members, partners and, notably, our customers. C&S and SpartanNash share many of the same values, including a strong emphasis on customers, teamwork and our communities," said C&S Chief Executive Officer Eric Winn. "Together, we are uniting some of the most advanced capabilities and boldest innovations in the distribution market to better serve communities across the nation. At C&S, we have a legacy of braggingly happy customers, and our team members strive every day to take care of our customers' stores as if they are our own. The combination of our two companies' capabilities puts our collective customers' stores and our own retail stores at the center of the plate, supporting their ability to thrive in a highly dynamic and competitive environment. Our customers need us more than ever, and we are building a sustainable platform for our team members to be able to support them long into the future."

With 20,000 associates, SpartanNash operates two complementary business segments: food wholesale and grocery retail. Its global supply chain network serves wholesale customers that include independent and chain grocers, national retail brands, e-commerce platforms, and U.S. military commissaries and exchanges. On the retail side, SpartanNash operates nearly 200 brick-and-mortar grocery stores, primarily under the banners of Family Fare, Martin's Super Markets, and D&W Fresh Market, in addition to dozens of pharmacies and fuel centers.

"We are energized by the opportunities this combination provides for our Associates and customers," said SpartanNash President and CEO Tony Sarsam. "With our organizational values in close alignment, there will be exciting new career opportunities for our people and a continued commitment to a People First culture. For our customers, this transaction creates the necessary scale, efficiency and purchasing power needed to enable independent retailers to compete more effectively with larger big box chains. Neighborhood grocers are essential pillars of our communities that we want to preserve and strengthen. A thriving hometown grocery store supports local farmers, bolsters the local economy, and enhances the overall health and well-being of the community."

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BASKETBALL

Ariana Dampier named SMC women's basketball head coach

SUBMITTED | LEADER PUBLICATIONS

COMMUNITY REPORT

DOWAGIAC — Southwestern Michigan College announced Thursday that Ariana Dampier will join the athletic department as head coach of the women's basketball team.

SMC's new fulltime head coach earned an associate degree in psychology in 2017 from Prairie State College in Chicago Heights, Ill. In 2020, she completed a bachelor's in psychology from Governors State University in University Park.

Dampier began coaching in 2020 as a women's basketball assistant at Morton College, helping the nationally-ranked team win the Region IV championship and make the program's first NJCAA National Tournament appearance.

After one season, she had the opportunity to take the reins of the Prairie State Pioneers in 2021, where she rebuilt the struggling program for two years.

For the last two seasons, Dampier has been the assistant varsity coach and head coach of the junior varsity team at Governors State. In 2024-25, the Jaguars won the Chicagoland Collegiate Athletic Conference and reached the NAIA Tournament Elite Eight for the first time in school history.

"I am excited to welcome Coach Dampier as our next Women's Basketball Head Coach," said Athletic Director Rodell Davis Sr. "From our very first conversation, her

See DAMPIER, Page B3

MOTOCROSS

READY FOR REDBUD?

Honda title sponsor for Redbud National

COMMUNITY REPORT

MORGANTOWN, W.Va. – MX Sports Pro Racing, Inc., has announced the renewal of its longstanding partnership with American Honda ahead of the 2025 Pro Motocross Championship, sanctioned by AMA Pro Racing, the summer component of the SuperMotocross World Championship regular season.

The storied manufacturer's support of the prestigious championship is highlighted by its title sponsorship of Michigan's legendary RedBud National on July 5, which has long served as American motocross' Independence Day tradition. Adding to the excitement of the Honda RedBud National will be live network coverage of the event on NBC Television Network, with a telecast of the second motos of both the 450 Class and 250 Class.

"The Pro Motocross Championship has been the bedrock of the sport here in the United States for more than 50 years and it's on the hallowed grounds of these iconic racetracks where American Honda became synonymous with winning and established itself as motocross' most decorated brand," said Brandon Wilson, American Honda's Manager of Racing & Advertising. "The opportunity for Honda to come together with RedBud, which is arguably the championship's crown-jewel event, is something we're incredibly excited about, and we can't wait to celebrate the Fourth of July alongside the most passionate fans in racing."

On the racetrack, Team Honda HRC Progressive has enjoyed a successful start to the season, with Jett Lawrence leading the 450 Class standings, having tallied four straight wins through each of the first four races.

Another unique aspect of current winning streak by its 450 Class athletes. Since 2022, Team Honda HRC Progressive has claimed premier-class victories at each of the manufacturer's titled events, with a pair of wins at Fox Raceway, in 2022 & 2024,

See REDBUD, Page B3

PHOTOS COURTESY OF STEPHEN LEGRAND | LEBIGUSA.COM

TENNIS

Brandywine doubles duo earns all-state honors

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

NILES CHARTER TOWNSHIP — The Brandywine Girl's Varsity Tennis Team's No. 1 Doubles team of Ashlyn Kohler and Alexandra Curtis-Lee has earned All-State Honorable Mention honors by the Michigan High School Tennis Coaches Association. The duo finished this season with a record of 24-4 and advanced to the quarterfinals at the state finals. They are the 19th and 20th Bobcat players to earn All-State honors.

"They certainly earned this recognition with wins over Allegan, North Muskegon, Lansing Catholic, Vicksburg and Kalamazoo Christian and our entire program is very proud of them," said head coach Joseph Marazita. "Just a great way for them to end their playing careers at Brandywine. They will be missed."

WRESTLING

Aurelia Trowbridge chooses SMC

COURTESY OF SMC ATHLETICS

DOWAGIAC — Aurelia Trowbridge of Buchanan High School has signed her NJCAA Letter of Intent to wrestle for Coach Todd Hesson and the Roadrunners during the 2025-2026 season.

Her coach at Buchanan said, "Aurelia is tough and hard working. Her best technique is a cradle!"

Hesson added, "Aurelia is enthusiastic and has a great work ethic. She is looking forward to helping develop and grow the SMC's Women's program."

Trowbridge had 14 wins in her senior season for the Bucks and placed at various tournaments throughout Southwestern Michigan. She joins Orion Ennis of Gobles, Madisyn Harrison of Marcellus, Grayce Swanson of Plainwell and current SMC student Alyse Koss in the 2024-25 recruiting class.

In April 2024, SMC's Board of Trustees unanimously approved the addition of Women's Wrestling, Men's Track & Field and Women's Track & Field as official NJCAA sports, to start competition in Fall 2025. Only 29 other NJCAA schools nationally currently offer women's wrestling. SMC will be the first two-year college in Michigan to offer the sport.

On April 9, the college announced the construction of a new 11,195 square-foot wing of the Zollar Building that will quadruple the space available to the men's and women's wrestling teams. It will double the mat capacity for practice sessions and provide additional competition space for hosting conference and regional meets. The new facility will also include a dedicated fitness and warm-up area, coaches' offices, locker rooms and additional restrooms. A groundbreaking ceremony was held in May, on-site work is well underway with occupancy targeted for February 2026.

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SOCCER

MAXWELL HARDEN | LEADER PUBLICATIONS

The Buchanan boys soccer team had a preseason tune-up June 22 when they hosted Berrien Springs for a scrimmage against the Shamrocks. The Bucks were 13-3-3 a season ago.

BASKETBALL

Wolf selected by Brooklyn Nets in first round of NBA Draft

COURTESY OF MICHIGAN ATHLETICS

BROOKLYN, N.Y. — University of Michigan junior forward Danny Wolf was selected Wednesday night (June 25) with the 27th overall pick by the Brooklyn Nets in the first round of the 2025 NBA Draft held at Barclays Center.

Wolf becomes the 78th Wolverine selected in the NBA Draft and the 32nd first-round pick. His decision to leave early for the NBA Draft made him the 23rd Wolverine and ninth U-M junior to do so.

After spending two seasons at Yale, Wolf transferred to Michigan for the 2024-25 season. He nearly averaged a double-double with 13.2 points and a Big Ten-best 9.7 rebounds per game. Wolf was instrumental in helping the Wolverines win their fourth Big Ten Tournament title and reach the NCAA Tournament's Sweet 16 -- U-M's sixth advancement to the second weekend.

• A finalist for the Karl Malone Award, Wolf was awarded All-Big Ten first-team honors by The Associated Press while garnering second-team honors from the conference coaches and media. An NABC Great Lakes District first-team selection, Wolf added All-Big Ten Tournament and NCAA South Regional honors.

• One of four Wolverines to play and start, in all 37 games, Wolf produced 26 games in double-figures with eight games of 20 plus, including a season-high 23 points at Minnesota (OT; Jan. 16). His 360 rebounds were the sixth most in a U-M single season. With 19 double-digit rebounding games, he had 15 double-doubles.

• With his first 100-plus assist season, Wolf was second on the team with 132 assists (3.6 apg) as he had 11 games of five-plus assists with a career-best nine against Arkansas (Dec. 10) in the Jimmy V Classic at Madison Square Garden. He added his first 50-block season (50; 1.4 bpg).

• In his two seasons with Yale (2022-24), Wolf helped the Bulldogs win the 2024 Ivy League Tournament and a bid to the Big Dance. As the 13th seed, Wolf led Yale to an upset over No. 4 seed Auburn (78-76) in the first round before falling to San Diego State (85-57) in the second.

• Throughout his three-year collegiate career, he started 68 of 90 games. With 50 double-figure games, he closed his career with 995 points (11.1 ppg). He added 36 double-digit rebound games with 714 in total (7.9 rpg). Using those numbers, he produced 29 total double-doubles -- Michigan (15) and Yale (14).

• The NBA Summer League returns to Las Vegas from July 10-20 at the Thomas and Mack Center and Cox Pavilion. All 30 teams will play 75 games over the 11-day competition, with full coverage on ESPN networks or NBA TV.

SUBMITTED | LEADER PUBLICATIONS

BASKETBALL

Kearsley's Groulx picks the Roadrunners

COURTESY OF SMC ATHLETICS

DOWAGIAC — Lucas Groulx of Kearsley High School in Flint has signed to continue his academic and basketball career with the Roadrunners.

"Luke is an amazing athlete and an even better human being," said Kearsley head coach Joe Corkran. "Whether working on his game or volunteering in the community, he's a first in, last out guy."

Groulx is the eighth member of the 2025 SMC Men's Basketball recruiting class, joining Dyoni Edwards of Pontiac, Deuce Winston II of Grand Blanc, Karmine Brown of Buchanan, Jovohn Ratliff and Jaylen Ingram from Hillcrest, Josh Dennis of Wayne and Bryce Hayes of Chicago.

"We are excited to have Luke join the Roadrunner family," added SMC Head Coach Rodell Davis. "He is a great young man and will bring a positive force to our team culture. As a player, he's a great competitor and works tirelessly on his game. He will bring some much-needed outside shooting to our lineup."

The Men's Basketball Roadrunners have had three consecutive winning seasons since reviving the program in 2022 after a 26-year hiatus. In the 2024-25 campaign, SMC knocked off #2-ranked South Suburban on the road, breaking the Bulldogs' 65-game home win streak. They finished with an overall record of 16-13 and set 35 team and individual school records during the year.

SUBMITTED | LEADER PUBLICATIONS

BASKETBALL

Hidalgo named to 2025 USA Basketball Women's AmeriCup Team

COURTESY OF NOTRE DAME ATHLETICS

COLORADO SPRINGS, Colo. — After three days of intense competition at the 2025 USA Basketball Women's AmeriCup Team Trials, Irish guard Hannah Hidalgo has earned a spot on the team, the organization announced on Thursday.

In total, 12 of the 21 athletes who tried out for the team made the cut and will travel to Santiago, Chile from June 28-July 6 for the 2025 FIBA Women's AmeriCup. The United States will open play in Group B with host nation Chile before facing Colombia, Puerto Rico and Mexico. The winner of the 2025 FIBA Women's AmeriCup will earn a spot in the 2026 FIBA Women's World Cup in Berlin next summer.

Hidalgo will be chasing her third gold medal as a part of Team USA, as the rising junior won gold medals as part of the U17 and U19 Women's World Cup teams in 2022 and 2023, respectively. Additionally, Hidalgo was the 2023 USA Basketball Female Athlete of the Year.

Last season, Hidalgo was one of the nation's top guards, earning a spot on the AP All-America First Team for the second straight season. In doing so, she became just the fourth player in history to make the First Team in each of their first two years of collegiate basketball.

As a sophomore, Hidalgo set the Notre Dame single-season scoring record with 23.8 points per game, topping the mark she set as a freshman (22.6). All in all, Hidalgo currently holds 23 Irish records, including single-season steals (160) and steals per game (4.6). She ranks 18th in program history with 1551 career points and reached the 1000-point mark in a program-record 44 games.

BASKETBALL

Orlando Magic pick MSU's Richardson in first round of NBA Draft

COURTESY OF MSU ATHLETICS

SUBMITTED | LEADER PUBLICATIONS

EAST LANSING — Michigan State men's basketball freshman guard Jase Richardson was selected by the Orlando Magic in the first round of the 2025 NBA Draft Thursday night.

Richardson, the 25th pick in the first round, is the 12th Spartan to be selected in the first round of the NBA Draft under Michigan State Head Coach Tom Izzo.

As a freshman at MSU, Richardson appeared in 36 games (15 starts), was second on the team in scoring with 12.1 points, grabbed 3.3 rebounds and handed out 1.9 assists in 25.3 minutes per game, second on the team. He was second on the team in field goal percentage (49.3 percent, 144-of-292), including shooting a team-best 41.2 percent from 3-point land (47-of-114) and 83.6 percent from the free throw line (102-of-122).

Richardson was a third team All-Big Ten selection by the league's coaches and the media, was selected to the league's All-Freshman Team and was named the Big Ten Freshman of the Week three times.

Richardson scored in double figures 23 times, including 14 of the last 15 games of the season when he moved into the starting lineup. In the final 15 games of the season, Richardson averaged 16.1 points and 4.6 rebounds, while shooting 47.0 percent from the floor (77-of-164), including 42.0 percent from 3-point land (29-of-69).

He scored at least 20 points six times, including a career-high 29 points in a win over Oregon on Feb. 8.

Richardson follows in the footsteps of his father, Jason Richardson, who was also a first-round pick in 2001 (No. 5, Golden State). His father played 14 years in the NBA, including two seasons (2010-12) with the Magic, where he averaged 12.8 points, 3.8 rebounds and 2.0 assists in 109 starts.

Richardson joins a Magic roster that includes former Spartan Gary Harris, who was a first-round pick in 2014 (No. 19, Chicago) and has spent the last five seasons in Orlando.

Twenty-five Spartans have been selected in the NBA Draft under Izzo, including 24 since the 2000 NBA Draft. All-time, Michigan State has had 68 players selected in the NBA Draft.

REDBUD

Continued from page B1

PHOTOS COURTESY OF STEPHEN LEGRAND | LEBIGUSA.COM

and another at Unadilla in 2023, on a banner afternoon that saw Jett Lawrence capture the 450 Class title as a rookie.

As part of the festivities surrounding the Honda RedBud National, the brand will also bring its duo of "Red Riders" from the Repsol Honda HRC effort in the FIM TrialGP and X-Trial series, including Toni Bou, a 37-time World Champion, and Gabriel Moncelli, a former Trial2 World Champion. The two Spaniards will showcase their Montesa Honda Cota 4RT trial motorcycles during a pair of exhibitions ahead of the following weekend's TrialGP round in Rhode Island. Additionally, Bou will be honored as Grand Marshal of the Honda RedBud National, where his decorated career and icon status will be celebrated in this honorary role.

"Honda has been a longstanding, loyal partner of the Pro Motocross Championship and we look forward to their continued support of this prestigious championship," said Davey Coombs, President, MX Sports Pro Racing. "They're one of the most decorated brands in not only SMX, but motorsports as a whole, and that's a testament to their relentless commitment to success, both on the racetrack and off. It's been an exciting start to the season as Jett Lawrence has reclaimed his position atop the 450 Class and it's going to be an honor for us to welcome Toni Bou as the RedBud Grand Marshal. His career is the standard for trials competition, and the opportunity to bring attention to him as the 'G.O.A.T.' of that discipline is special for Pro Motocross."

Traffic detours in Buchanan area

Due to construction projects, Redbud Trail is closed in downtown Buchanan. See routes below and follow roadside message boards. See routes below. For more information, visit redbudmx.com.

Traffic coming from west of Redbud MX, eastbound on US12

Traveling in from northwest Indiana, Illinois, etc. eastbound via I-94

• From I-94 eastbound, take Exit 4A onto US 12 East.

• Go 17 miles and turn left onto Bakertown Road (look for Store 12 market at intersection).

• In approximately two miles, stay right at the "Y" and continue northbound onto Broceus School Road.

• At the stop sign, turn right (northbound) onto Miller Road and continue 0.5 mile to then next stop sign at the Main Street intersection.

Traffic coming from south of Redbud MX

Traveling in from South Bend, Indianapolis, etc. via I-80/I-90 toll road from either direction, or, northbound via U.S. 31

• If traveling on I-80/I-90, take northbound exit for U.S. 31.

• Continue northbound on U.S. 31 and take Exit 7 (in Michigan) for Walton Road.

• Turn left onto Walton Road.

• Continue westbound on Walton Road for approximately three miles to the stop light and turn right onto Red Bud Trail.

Traffic coming from north of Redbud MX

Traveling in from most parts of Michigan southbound via U.S. 31

• There's no detour. To avoid construction, take Exit 15 (Berrien Springs) and turn right off the ramp.

• Drive westbound about 0.5 mile, then turn left at the stop light onto Red Bud Trail.

Traffic coming from east of Redbud MX

Traveling westbound via M-60 or U.S. 12

• M-60 and U.S. 12 westbound merge into U.S. 12 at an interchange approximately 5 miles east of U.S. 31.

• Take the northbound exit toward Holland onto U.S. 31, then take Exit 7 for Walton Road.

• Turn left onto Walton Road.

• Continue westbound on Walton Road for approximately three miles to the stop light and turn right onto Red Bud Trail.

DAMPIER

Continued from page B1

basketball knowledge and vision for the program were immediately clear. What impressed me most is her holistic approach — she's committed not only to developing strong athletes and building a winning culture but also to being a mentor who genuinely cares about our players' well-being. Coach Dampier understands the importance of mental health and is passionate about supporting our student-athletes both on and off the court. I look forward to the future of our program under her leadership."

"I'm truly thankful for this opportunity to lead the Roadrunners as Head Coach at Southwestern Michigan College." Dampier said. "I'm committed to building a culture of excellence, growth and relentless effort — on and off the court. The goal isn't just to win games, but to shape young women and help them rise in every aspect of life. I'm excited to build something special with the support of this amazing community behind us. Can't wait to get to work!"

Dampier takes over the helm of the Roadrunners from Coach Jay Jenkins, who left SMC earlier this month after two seasons to pursue other coaching opportunities at the university level.

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Also for sale, a RIF6 adjustable height standing desk converter — 32-inch wide laptop riser or dual monitor workstation. Easily sit or stand with gas spring lift. Still in the box. Asking $75. Will sell in combo with the computer or separately.

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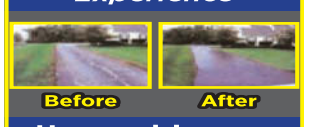
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Wow! July Consignment Auction, bidding ends July 14. 14ft Aluminum 1965 Richline w/trailer, gold, silver coins, collections, currency, antiques, collectibles and much more! Visit NarhiAuctions.com often for updates. Questions? Call 810-266-6474.

Gladding Online Estate Auction, bid through July 15. Tons of power/shop tools, antique anvil, bikes, collectibles, furniture and much more. Visit Bid.SherwoodAuctionServiceLLC.com to bid and see others! Questions? Call Joe, 1-800-835-0495.

Oscoda Massive Man Cave Online Auction – July 15! Preview NOW! BiditMi.com Harley motorcycles, classic vehicles, tools, ammo, car/bike parts, hunting gear, trains, collectibles +. 1,000 lots! Plus LP Auction! Call 313-600-5451.

Midland Online Estate Auction. Bidding open. JD8210 Tractor, JD3420 Telehandler, JD320 Skidsteer, Snap-On Tools, show buggies, buckwagon, farm equipment, shop tools. Nice sale! Bid @ JohnPeckAuctions.com. Need an auction? Call John Peck 989-426-8061.

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Public Notices

Public Notices

PUBLIC NOTICE

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING
ONTWA TOWNSHIP, CASS COUNTY, MICHIGAN

EAGLE LAKE AND CHANNELS RENEWAL OF SPECIAL ASSESSMENT DISTRICT AND GARVER LAKE AND CHANNELS RENEWAL OF SPECIAL ASSESSMENT DISTRICT

TO: ALL RECORD OWNERS OF, OR PARTIES INTEREST IN, LAND IN THE SPECIAL ASSESSMENT DISTRICT DESCRIBED BELOW

Properties abutting Eagle Lake and Garver Lake, its Channels, and deeded assess there to, in Ontwa Township, Cass County, Michigan

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Board of Trustees, Ontwa, County of Cass will meet on Monday, July 14, 2025 at the Ontwa Township Hall, Edwardsburg, MI, 6:00 p.m. to hear any objections to the Assessment as reported to the Township Board pursuant to Public Act 188. Each listed parcel in the special assessment district will be assessed an amount to vary from $0 to $150 per year, for a ten (10) year period starting in 2025. The amount to be assessed each year will be determined at the September Township Board of Trustees meeting each year.

PLEASE TAKE FURTHER NOTICE Eagle Lake and Garver Lake has had a Special Assessment District (SAD) in place for the eradication or control of aquatic weeds and plants, for the last 5 and 10 years, respectively, for infestations of Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) that have been managed by various methods over the years that have enabled the lake to remain navigable and enjoyed for fishing and recreational purposes.

PLEASE TAKE FURTHER NOTICE as provided for by Public Act 188 of 1954, a Township Board can initiate action to RENEW a SAD that is expiring.

PLEASE TAKE FURTHER NOTICE that any person may appeal and be heard at the said Hearing, which is called pursuant to the provisions of Public Act 188 as amended.

The Township Board shall maintain a record of parties who appear to protest at the hearing. If the hearing is terminated or adjourned for the day before the party is provided the opportunity to be heard, a party whose appearance was recorded shall be considered to have protested the assessment roll in person. The Township will provide auxiliary aids or services to individuals with disabilities. Persons needing such services should contact the office of the Township Clerk not less than four days prior to the hearing.

Niles Daily Star:
Jun. 21 and 28, 2025
HEARING/SAD

PUBLIC NOTICE

NOTICE OF SELF STORAGE SALE

Please take notice Aloha Storage located at 3001 South 11th Street, Niles, MI, 49120 intends to hold an Auction of storage units in default of payment. The sale will occur at the facility on 7/8/2025 at 12:00PM. Unless stated otherwise the description of the contents are household goods, furnishings and garage essentials. Unit #K020; Unit #S028. This sale may be withdrawn at any time without notice.
7528-309474

Niles Daily Star:
June 21 and 28, 2025
SALE 07.08.25

PUBLIC NOTICE

NOTICE OF SELF STORAGE SALE

Please take notice Aloha Storage located at 3001 South 11th Street, Niles, MI, 49120 intends to hold an Auction of storage units in default of payment. The sale will occur as an Online auction via the sale will occur at the facility on 7/8/2025 at 12:00 PM. Unless stated otherwise the description of the contents are household goods, furnishings and garage essentials. Unit #K020; Unit #S028. This sale may be withdrawn at any time without notice.
7528-309474

Niles Daily Star:
June 21 and 28, 2025
SALE 07.08.25

PUBLIC NOTICE

NOTICE OF SELF STORAGE SALE

Please take notice Just Simple Storage - Menominee located at N710 County Rd 577, Menoninee, MI, 49858 intends to hold an Auction of storage units in default of payment. The sale will occur as an Online auction via www.storagetreasures.com on 7/17/2025 at 12:00 PM. Unless stated otherwise the description of the contents are household goods, furnishings and garage essentials. Unit #51. This sale may be withdrawn at any time without notice.
7528-310270

Niles Daily Star:
June 28 and July 5, 2025
SALE 07.17.25

PUBLIC NOTICE

AUCTION

Niles Storage, 2457 Yankee St.
Niles, MI. 49120
July 5 @ 4:00 PM

Owner's lien - overdue rents
Unit # 52
Name: Brooke King
Misc. household Items, multiple lg and small boxes

Niles Daily Star
June 28 and July 5, 2025
STORAGE AUCTION

PUBLIC NOTICE

ORDINANCE #234
CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF HOWARD
COUNTY OF CASS, STATE OF MICHIGAN

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that during a public meeting of the Board of Trustees of Howard Charter Township, County of Cass, State of Michigan on June 17, 2025, the board adopted Ordinance #234, an Ordinance to Amend Zoning Ordinance # 192.
A Summary of the Ordinance is as follows:
THE CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF HOWARD ORDAINS:
SECTION I Amendment to Howard Charter Township Zoning Ordinance #192 - Section 3.02 Definitions
Dwelling, Multiple Family: A building designed for and occupied by three (3) or more families living independently with separate housekeeping, cooking, sleeping purposes, and bathroom facilities for each. Multiple family dwelling units include the following but exclude hotel and motel:
A. Apartment: An apartment is an attached dwelling unit with shared walls, contained in a building with other apartment units which are commonly reached off a common stair landing or walkway. Apartments are typically rented by the occupants. Apartment buildings often have a central heating system and other central utility connections and common yard space.
B. Studio/Efficiency Unit: Studio/Efficiency unit is a type of apartment unit consisting of one (1) principal room, plus bathroom and kitchen facilities, hallways, closets and/or a dining alcove located directly off the principal room.
Dwelling, One Family or Single Family: A building containing not more than one dwelling unit designed for residential use by one family.
Dwelling, Two Family or Duplex: A building, designed exclusively to be occupied by two (2) families living independently of each other, with separate housekeeping, cooking, and bathroom facilities for each.
SECTION II Amendment to Howard Charter Township Zoning Ordinance #192 - Section 4.03 Special Land Uses
R. Multiple Family Dwelling
SECTION III Amendment to Howard Charter Township Zoning Ordinance #192 - Section 18.02 Specific Standards for Special Land Use Approval
T. Two Family Dwelling and Multiple Family Dwelling
1. Multiple Family Dwellings shall be located on a parcel of at least five (5) acres or more.
2. Two Family Dwellings shall be located on a parcel of at least one (1) acre or more.
3. A minimum of fifteen percent (15%) common usable open space shall be provided on site which shall not include parking area, driveways or required setbacks.
4. Driveway shall be a minimum of twenty-five (25) feet from adjacent property lines.
5. There shall be only one (1) Two Family Dwelling or Multiple Family Dwelling structure per parcel.
6. Subject to residential development standards applicable to the zoning district in which it is located.
SECTION IV Severability
In the event that any one or more sections, provisions, phrases or words of this ordinance shall be found to be invalid by a court of competent jurisdiction such holding shall not affect the validity or the enforceability of the remaining sections provisions, phrases or words of this Ordinance.
SECTION V Repeal
All ordinance or parts of ordinances in conflict herewith are hereby repealed.
SECTION VI Effective Date
This Ordinance amending Howard Charter Township Zoning Ordinance# 192 hall take effect eight
(8) days after publication in a newspaper of general circulation within the Township.
Upon roll call vote:
The following voted aye: Conover, Gordon, Hurlbutt, Wozniak and Kasprzak
The following voted nay:
The following members were absent: Kroa and Johnson

CERTIFICATE

The undersigned, as the duly elected and acting Clerk of the Charter Township hereby certifies that Ordinance #234 was duly adopted by the Charter Township Board at a Regular Meeting of said Board at which a quorum was present held on June 17, 2025
Published date: June 28th, 2025
Effective date: July 7, 2025

CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF HOWARD
/s/
Sheri Wozniak, Clerk
1345 Barron Lake Road
Niles, Michigan 49120
(269) 684-0072

6-18-2025 Date

Niles Daily Star: Jun. 28, 2025
ORDINANCE #234

PUBLIC NOTICE

SYNOPSIS OF THE MINUTES OF THE ONTWA TOWNSHIP SPECIAL PUBLIC HEARING MONDAY JUNE 9, 2025

The Ontwa Township Special Public Hearing was called to order at 5:45pm on June 9, 2025.
Pledge of Allegiance
Roll Call
Approval of the Agenda
Public Comment
New Business: Public hearing on increasing property taxes, L-4029 Resolution
Meeting Adjourned 6:01pm
Minutes of Board of Trustee meetings may be found on the Township website: www.ontwatwp.org
Respectfully submitted by Tina VanBelle, Ontwa Township Clerk
Approved for Publication by Supervisor Meryl Christensen

Niles Daily Star:
June 28, 2025
SYNOPSIS

PUBLIC NOTICE

SYNOPSIS OF THE MINUTES OF THE ONTWA TOWNSHIP BOARD OF TRUSTEES MONDAY JUNE 9, 2025

The regular meeting of the Ontwa Township Board of Trustees was called to order at 6:02pm.
Pledge of Allegiance
Roll Call
Approval of the Agenda
Public Comment
Approval of Consent Agenda
Commissioner's Report: Commissioner Marchetti
Committee Board Reports: Wastewater, Zoning, Ambulance, Buildings & Grounds, Planning, Parks Board, Police, Adamsville Cemetery, Fire Department
Old Business: Elkhart Road Project
New Business: DASAS, Fireworks Permits, Gunn Park, WW Clean Earth, Eagle Lake and Garver Lake SAD Resolutions
Schedule of Township meetings: Board of Trustees July 14th , Police Board June 12th, Wastewater Board June 25th, Planning Commission July 6th, Ambulance Board June 11th.
Meeting Adjourned 6:53pm
Minutes of Board of Trustee meetings may be found on the Township website: www.ontwatwp.org
Respectfully submitted by Tina VanBelle, Ontwa Township Clerk
Approved for Publication by Supervisor Meryl Christensen

Niles Daily Star:
June 28, 2025
SYNOPSIS 06.09.25

PUBLIC NOTICE

Howard Township
Cass County, Michigan
Board of Trustees
June 17, 2025

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. at the Township Hall.

Board Action
Approved Meeting Agenda.
Approved the minutes of the 05/20/25 Board Meeting
Approved the financial report with an ending balance of 1,816,220.03 including a CD
Approved the payment of bills through June 17, 2025
Approved the departmental reports
Approved Ordinance #234
Public Comment None
Adjourn the meeting at 7:15pm

Niles Daily Star:
June 28, 2025
SYNOPSIS 06.17.28

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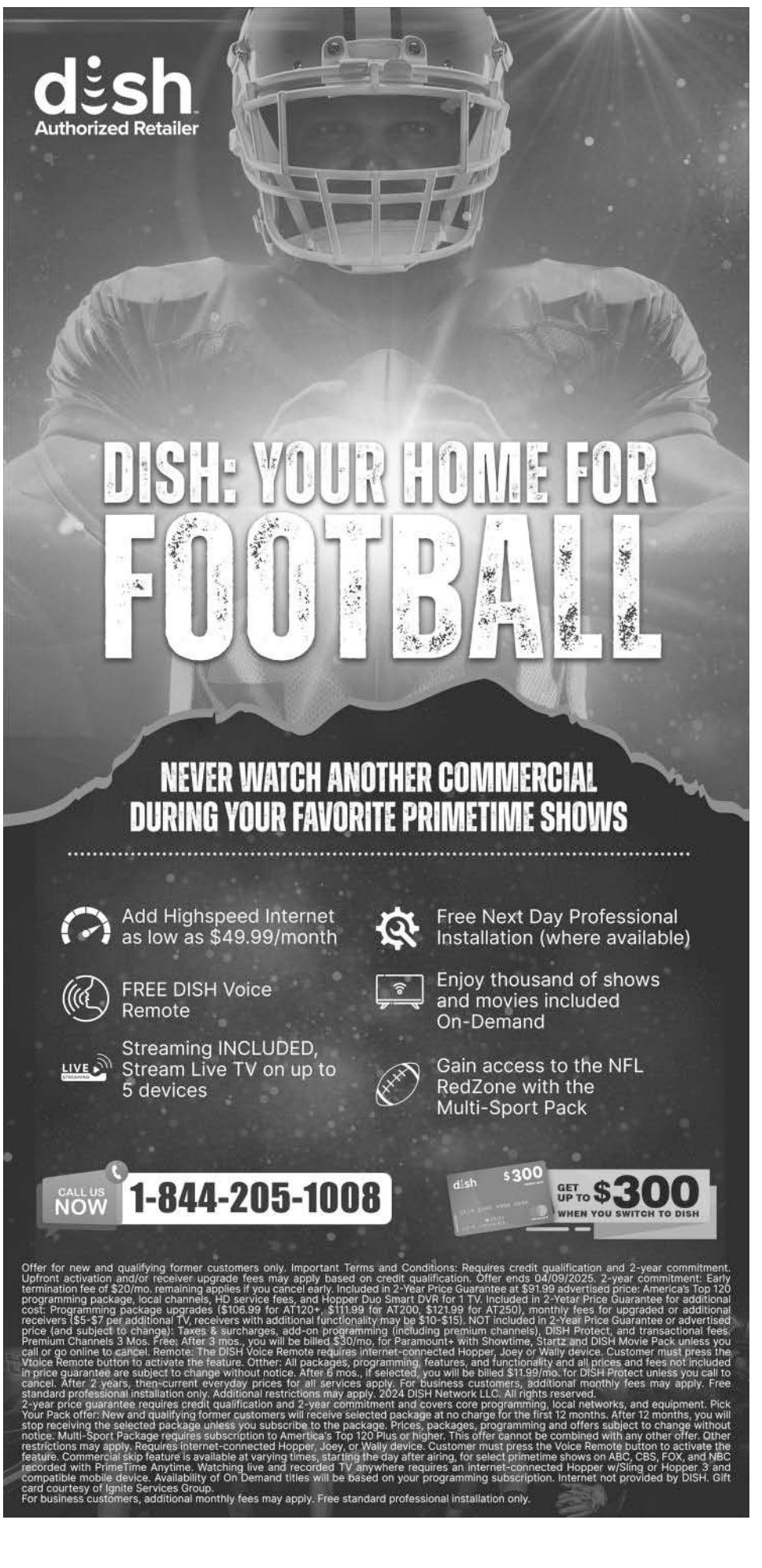
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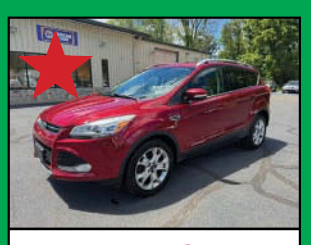

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A PLACE TO BELONG

Rising Kites Coffee empowers people with disabilities

The discovery that their child had been born with Down Syndrome signalled a different life than what Danielle Grandholm and her husband, Matt, had planned but the change helped create a new mission: helping families throughout the world from a small coffee shop in Southwestern Michigan.

Rising Kites resides near downtown Bridgman, appearing similar to most coffee houses. Patrons enjoy free WiFi from a variety of cozy chairs, diner tables, and a window-adjacent couch. A fenced in yard allows for outdoor seating during warmer months. A full menu of coffee drinks, powered by Sawyer's Infusco Coffee Roasters, is available, along with snacks and donuts from Red Coach Donuts and Bit of Swiss Artisan Breads & Pastries in Stevensville.

A closer look at the wall decorations or inquiring about the mass of ribbons hanging from the ceiling quickly opens another story about Rising Kites, calling back to the moment the Grandholms learned about their daughter Sammie's differences.

"We just went home feeling really overwhelmed and ill-equipped for how to care for her," said Grandholm, the founder and director of Rising Kites.

She described the lack of resources or direction for parents in her position at that moment. She knew their life had suddenly changed trajectory, but she was unsure where it would lead or how to navigate it. After a year of sorting it out, Danielle knew she wanted to help families like hers, those who feel lost or alone or who need encouragement when receiving the same diagnosis.

Rising Kites started with the simple act of creating and giving out resource-filled "gift bags" to

See BELONG, Page C2

Rising Kites is growing in two ways this summer, with an expansion of the building to add additional seating, quiet areas, and storage, as well as starting a flower farm. The farm will also employ those with disabilities and fresh flowers will be available for purchase in the shop or with a summer-long subscription.

The Morris to host Les Miserables in August

COMMUNITY REPORT

SOUTH BEND, Ind. — Tickets are on sale now for Cameron Mackintosh's acclaimed production of Alain Boublil and Claude-Michel Schönberg's Tony Award-winning musical phenomenon, LES MISÉRABLES. This production will close out The American Theatre Guild's 24–25 BROADWAY IN SOUTH BEND Series at the Morris Performing Arts Center for eight performances Aug. 5–10, 2025.

Tickets to LES MISÉRABLES are available for purchase at BroadwayInSouthBend.com, MorrisCenter.org and Etix.com. Group ticket savings for 10+ are available by contacting Groups@ATGuild.org.

Performance schedule:
Tuesday, Aug. 5 – 7:30 p.m.
Wednesday, Aug. 6 – 7:30 p.m.
Thursday, Aug. 7 – 7:30 p.m.
Friday, Aug. 8 – 7:30 p.m.
Saturday, Aug. 9 – 2 & 7:30 p.m.
Sunday, Aug. 10 – 1 & 6:30 p.m.

Cameron Mackintosh said, "The phenomenon of Les Misérables never fails to astound me. No show in history has been able to continually reinvent itself and remain a contemporary musical attracting new generations of brilliant new talent, many of whom go on to international stardom. No show in the world has ever demonstrated the survival of the human spirit better than Les Miz, and it's time to let the people sing again. We are all thrilled to be Bringing Her Home to you." -more-

Celebrated alum Nick Cartell portrays the fugitive 'Jean Valjean' with Nick Rehberger as 'Inspector Javert.' They are joined by Lindsay Heather Pearce as 'Fantine,' Matt Crowle as 'Thénardier,' Victoria Huston-Elem as 'Madame Thénardier,' Christian Mark Gibbs as 'Enjolras,' Mya Rena Hunter as 'Éponine,' Jake David Smith as 'Marius' and Delaney Guyer as 'Cosette.' Emerson Mae Chan and Greta Schaefer alternate in the role of 'Little Cosette/Young Éponine.' Jackson Parker Gill and Jack Jewkes alternate in the role of 'Gavroche.'

The touring ensemble includes Kyle Adams, Ashley Alexandra, Jeremiah Alsop, Colin Anderson, David Andino, Daniel Gerard Bittner, Jenna Burns, Steve Czarnecki, Arianne DiCerbo, Christian Engelhardt, David Young Fernandez, Nicole Fragala, Gillian Hassert, Audrey Hoffman, Randy Jeter, Danny Martin, Mikako Martin, Andrew Marks Maughan, Paige McNamara, Ashley Dawn Mortensen, Gracie Annabelle Parker, Tim Quartier, Juliette Redden, Matt Rosell, Christopher Robin Sapp, Kaitlyn Sumner, Kyle Timson, David T. Walker, Lamont J. Whitaker, J.T. Wood and Jonathan Young.

Set against the backdrop of 19th century France, LES MISÉRABLES tells an enthralling story of broken dreams and unrequited love, passion, sacrifice and redemption – a timeless testament to the survival of the human spirit. This epic and uplifting story has become one of the most celebrated musicals in theatrical history.

Boublil & Schönberg's magnificent score of LES MISÉRABLES includes the classic songs "I Dreamed a Dream," "On My Own," "Bring Him Home," "Do You Hear The People Sing?," "One Day More," "Master of the House" and many more. Seen by over 130 million people worldwide in 53 countries, 438 cities and 22 languages, LES MISÉRABLES is undisputedly still one of the world's most popular musicals.

To date, LES MISÉRABLES remains the sixth longest-running Broadway production of all time.

Since Cameron Mackintosh first conceived this acclaimed new production of LES MISÉRABLES in 2009 to celebrate the show's 25th anniversary, it has taken the world by storm continuing to enjoy record-breaking runs in countries including North America, Australia, Japan, South Korea, Netherlands, Belgium, and Spain. LES MISÉRABLES is now in its 40th record-breaking year in London's West End and to celebrate the milestone the show launched its first World Tour of the highly anticipated LES MISÉRABLES THE ARENA SPECTACULAR, playing dates throughout Europe, Australia, Taiwan, Japan, South Korea, and more destinations to be announced. Simultaneously, and for the first time ever, 11 leading amateur companies in the UK will present their own staging of the full show across the country in 2025. In 2024, the remastered and remixed Oscar-winning movie was also released again in several countries around the world.

Cameron Mackintosh's production of LES MISÉRABLES is written by Alain Boublil and Claude-Michel Schönberg and is based on the novel by Victor Hugo. It has music by Claude-Michel Schönberg, lyrics by Herbert Kretzmer and original French text by Alain Boublil and Jean-Marc Natel, additional material by James Fenton and adaptation by Trevor Nunn and John Caird. Orchestrations are by Stephen Metcalfe, Christopher Jahnke and Stephen Brooker with original orchestrations by John Cameron. The production is directed by James Powell and Laurence Connor, designed by Matt Kinley inspired by the paintings of Victor Hugo, with costumes by Andreane Neofitou, additional costume designs by Christine Rowland and Paul Wills, lighting by Paule Constable, sound by Mick Potter, projections realized by Finn Ross, Jonathon Lyle and Fifty Nine Productions, musical staging by Geoffrey Garratt, music supervision by Stephen Brooker and James Moore, and casting by The TRC Company.

The LES MISÉRABLES associate director is Corey Agnew, musical staging associate is Jesse Robb, resident director is Kyle Timson and music direction is by Glenn Alexander II. The LES MISÉRABLES tour stage management team is led by Kenneth J. Davis with Claire Farrokh and John N. Fortunato. The company management team is Chris Danner and Elle Aghabala.

Miles Nielsen & The Rusted Hearts to perform at The Acorn

COMMUNITY REPORT

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THREE OAKS — Miles Nielsen & The Rusted Hearts are gearing up to perform at the Acorn Saturday, July 5. Tickets range from $35-70 and can be purchased online at acornlive.org.

Rockford, IL-based Miles Nielsen has spent nearly a decade enthralling audiences with music that draws force from the prime years of Western-influenced rock music and classic '60s soul. Claiming influences as diverse as Otis Redding's classic soul and Jellyfish's cult power pop recordings.

Led by free-wheeling frontman Miles Nielsen, The Rusted Hearts have been wowing audiences for years with the diversity of their sound, the tightness of their harmonies, and the quality of their songcraft. Equally comfortable in a compact 3-minute pop song and an epic 10-minute jam, the band has toured incessantly since their inception in 2011, amassing an army of hardcore followers that have dubbed themselves the Rusted Herd.

BELONG

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families that received a diagnosis of Down Syndrome for their child

"It took off really quickly," said Grandholm.

With the hashtags #theluckyfew and #downsyndrome, the word of mouth spread on Instagram to families. The Rising Kites nonprofit found medical facilities throughout the United States to give out the bags. Families around the world have been recipients, each represented by one of those ribbons hanging in the coffee shop.

The idea for a coffee shop was always a part of the plan, coming from a desire to find ways to employ individuals like their daughter. It happened much sooner than expected. Rising Kites received $50,000 from the Stephen E. Upton Love Your Community Grant and a line in the application about the coffee shop moved things forward.

"They said 'we want you to do that with this money now'," explained Danielle.

They saw the building at 4158 Lake Street in Bridgman go up for sale and, having previously housed a coffee business, the Grandholms knew it was a great fit for their vision. Rising Kites Coffee opened on May 31st, 2024.

A closer look at the shop highlights the Rising Kites mission. The shop is staffed by employees with Down Syndrome, assisted by a manager and assistant managers. The space is designed to be both kid and disability friendly, offering up both safety and a sense of belonging. In addition to donuts, the menu also offers allergy-friendly and gluten-free snacks. A sense of joy is woven throughout, from the rainbow of the ribbon collection, to signs offering hope and encouragement.

"I feel like it's really hard for people to leave here grumpy," said Danielle.

Though the Grandholms had no background in coffee, the partnership with Infusco Coffee has helped give Rising Kites everything a coffee liver desires. Aaron Darling and the rest of the Infusco team trained the Rising Kite managers and directors in all the methods of making a variety of coffee drinks, skills passed to the employees when they are hired. A Guatemalan bean is even sourced specifically for the shop, grown on a multi-generational farm by a man whose own aunt has Down Syndrome.

Rising Kites is growing in two ways this summer, with an expansion of the building to add additional seating, quiet areas, and storage, as well as starting a flower farm. The farm will also employ those with disabilities and fresh flowers will be available for purchase in the shop or with a summer-long subscription.

The goal of Rising Kites is to employ those with disabilities, but also to provide job training for their future endeavours and to show other businesses and organizations that individuals with disabilities are willing and able to work successfully. They are hoping to partner with organizations to find other placement opportunities outside of the coffee shop, which currently has a waiting list for employees.

"They want jobs," said Danielle. "They want opportunities. I am hoping that they can the sense that they should take up space, that they should feel a sense of belonging."

She nodded to a passing employee, recounting the story of his first day working at Rising Kites.

"When his mom came in and saw him behind the counter, she cried," described Grandholm.

The mission of Rising Kites is to spread the understanding, both within and outside of the Down Syndrome community, that people who are different also belong.

You can find more information about the Rising Kites organization, the coffee shop, and the flower farm at risingkitescoffee.org.

United Way of Southwest Michigan to host annual Rock the Boat event

COMMUNITY REPORT

ST. JOSEPH — United Way of Southwest Michigan's Rock the Boat event is set to make a splash once again this July.

Presented By Honor Credit Union, the annual cardboard boat race is set to take place Thursday, July 17 at the Inn at Harbor Shores in St. Joseph.

Participants will craft a seaworthy (cardboard) vessel to brave the St. Joseph River at 5 p.m. for an event that promises to be an evening full of excitement, laughter, and team spirit—all with a tropical twist. Admission is free.

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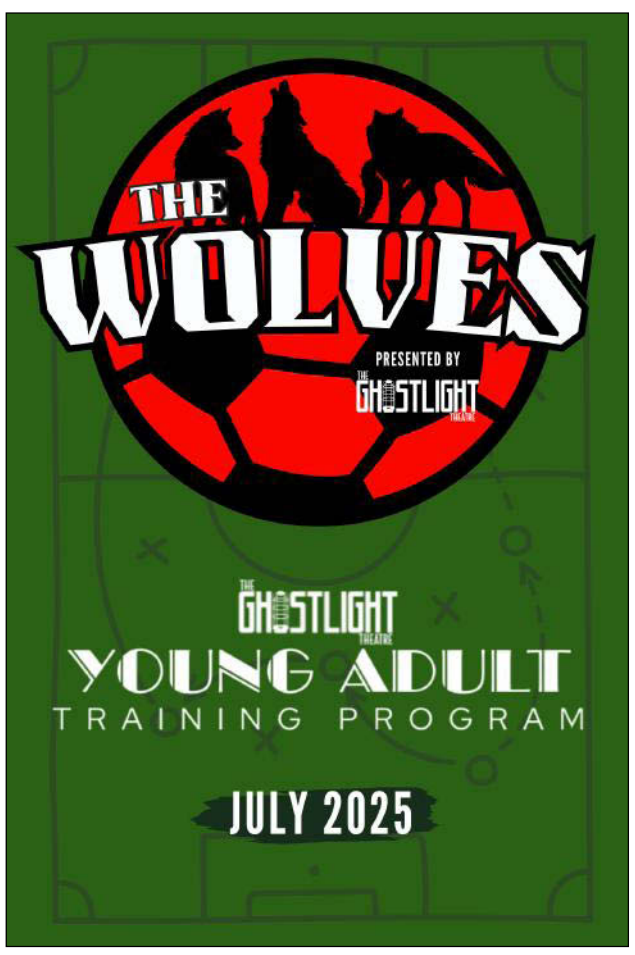

Ghostlight Theatre to perform 'The Wolves'

By MAXWELL HARDEN
Leader Publications

BENTON HARBOR — The Ghostlight Theatre in Benton Harbor is gearing up for its next production "The Wolves" by Sarah Delappe, set to debut at 7:30 p.m. Thursday, July 17.

Directed by Lindsay Gilmore Gaspari, the contemporary slice-of-life play depicts a girls' indoor soccer team and practice drills as they prepare for a succession of games. As they warm up and talk about life, the girls navigate the politics of their personal lives as well as the politics of the larger world, gossiping about things like war, menstrual products, genocide, sports, pop culture, and their relationships.

Each team member struggles to negotiate her individuality while being a part of a group. They bond over a bag of orange slices and personal traumas. The team seems as if it may disband after the sudden death of one of the girls, but they manage to come together. In the end, the surviving team players prepare to play yet another game together – closer, stronger, wiser, and fiercer.

Tickets are $20 for students, $25 for seniors and $32 for adults. For more information, visit ghostlight-bh.com.

FILE PHOTOS | LEADER PUBLICATIONS

Annual Summer Festival, BBQ Competition to return to Dowagiac in July

By MAXWELL HARDEN
Leader Publications

DOWAGIAC — The Greater Dowagiac Chamber of Commerce's annual Dowagiac Summer Festival and BBQ Competition is on the horizon.

Events will take place July 18 and 19 in downtown Dowagiac. The annual two-day street festival will host food trucks, commercial vendors, in-store promotions, live music, children's amusement rides and activities featuring a pop up splash park on Commercial Street.

The second annual BBQ competition will take place Saturday, July 20 and is sanctioned by the Kansas City Barbecue Society. Details regarding the competition and the registration can be found at dowagiacchamber.com, under events.

In conjunction with Dowagiac's Summer Festival, Southwestern Michigan College will host the 51st Annual Steve's Run, Friday July 18. Named the Original Road and Trail Race, the run will once again start and finish in Downtown Dowagiac, and take participants over paved roads, a golf course, a cemetery, and the Southwestern Michigan College wooded trails.

The race starts at 6 p.m. and registration can be found at www.swmc.edu under events.

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